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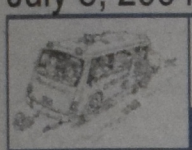


Class trip ... p.12

Building up Christian education in Africa ... p.10

59th year of publication

Violence in Nigeria becoming more widespread

Emergency rule, negotiations fail to stem violence.

Obed Minchakpu

JOS,. Nigeria(Compass) – Rahuta Nicodemus, a housewife in her 50s, was preparing to go to her farm plot when suddenly she heard staccato sounds of machine guns around the village. Within minutes, the village was engulfed in pandemonium – shouts, wailing women and children, houses set ablaze. In panic, Rahuta dashed into her house, grabbed her blind husband's arm and dragged him out.

"Let's run! There are gunmen killing people," she told him.

In a painful voice, the blind Nicodemus told his wife, "Just go! Go, I say! Leave me here to die. Run for your life!"

These were the last words she heard from him. Moments later, she looked back to see him slump to the street and die in a volley of bullets.

Nigerians in central Plateau State, load their belongings onto a truck as they flee the continuing violence between Christians and Muslims in the region.

Muslims employ guerilla tactics

Mr. Nicodemus' tragic death took place on May 18 in Sabon Gida, one of four Christian villages attacked by Muslim militants in the Quanpan local government area of Plateau state. Attacks left five Christians dead and several houses destroyed in Sabon Gida, Jirim, Bakin Ciyawa, and Gidan Soba.

Religious violence has continued to plague the central Nigerian state despite the declaration of a state of emergency. Police authorities say the situation has become difficult to contain because Muslim militants employ guerilla tactics to attack Christian towns and villages.

On May 28, Muslim militia attacked the Christian villages of Duwi and Lyanngil in Langtang local government area, killing three Christians and displacing 3,000 others whose homes were razed by fire.

Islamic law sparked conflict

Religious conflict between Muslims and Christians has become endemic in Nigeria in recent years, following the implementation of Islamic laws in 12 northern states. On September 7, 2001, rioting in Plateau's capital city of Jos led to the death of an estimated 10,000 people. The conflagration was sparked by a group of Muslims who barricaded a road leading into an area of the town inhabited by Christians.

Since then, Muslim militias have carried the religious war out of Jos and into rural towns and villages. In the past three years, 17 local government areas of the state have been engulfed in religious violence.

Rev. Yakubu Pam, chairman of the Plateau state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), told Compass that over 30,000 Christians have been displaced as a result of incessant attacks.

Last month, Christians aggrieved over the deaths of relatives and neighbors launched reprisal attacks on the Muslims in Yelwa which claimed an estimated 350 lives.

Muslim leaders responded by threatening the Nigerian government with a full-scale religious war, prompting President Olusegun Obasanjo to declare a state of emergency in Plateau.

Kano Crisis

Muslim leaders in the northern state of Kano, which lies about 400 miles from Yelwa, organized a public procession to protest attacks on Muslims. Sheikh Umar Kabo led the protest, which quickly turned violent. Hundreds of Christians reportedly died at the hands of rampaging militants.

Rev. A.U. Ubah and Foster Ekeleme, chairman and secretary respectively of the CAN state chapter, accused the governor and the Kano government officials of abetting the Muslim attacks.

For his part, Kano Governor Malam Ibrahim Shekarau described the violence against Christians as a terrible event that caused him much pain.

On May 18, Obasanjo bowed to pressure from Muslim leaders and declared a state of emergency in Plateau, drawing charges from Christian Members of Parliament that the president was biased against Christians.

President slow to act

Rev. Yakubu Pam, chairman of the Plateau state chapter of CAN, publicly criticized Obasanjo for his handling of the crisis. Echoing the view of other Christian leaders,

See **Nigeria** *on page 3...*

CRC Synod addresses shortage of ministers

Harry der Nederlanden

Synod 2004 of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting on the campus of Calvin College June11-17, dealt with some complex and potentially divisive issues but the work was carried out in a good spirit and with a minimum of tension. Whenever that happens in an assembly dominated by those of Dutch origin, we know the Spirit is present.

Calvin Seminary is not graduating enough ministers to fill the vacancies in the CRC. Some 130 churches are now without ministers, and with retirements exceeding new candidates by 15-20 per year over the next few years, that number will grow very quickly. The CRC is, therefore, feeling pressure to admit to the ministry those who have not gone to seminary but who have preaching and leadership gifts and those who have attended seminaries other than Calvin as well as pastors who come to the CRC from other denominations. But that raises many difficulties. Among other things, how do you keep high standards for the ministry and how do you make sure pastors know and honor the teachings and traditions of the denomination? A large document and a large part of Synod's time was devoted to this potentially contentious issue.

Any overture to revise the confessions, especially the Heidelberg Catechism, is fraught with peril. And the one before synod, seeking to revise Q&A 80 which calls the mass a "condemnable idolatry," has been in the making for quite some time. The Reformation may have happened almost 500 years ago, but that clash is part of the CRC identity.

Add to these issues the explosive same-sex marriage issue, forced on the CRC by First Toronto, and proposals to change the denominational structure and the way the Banner, the denominational magazine, is funded, and one might have expected a certain amount of friction and heat. But synod remained cool and level-

See **Synod** *page 2...*

News

Synod *continued from page 1*

headed – in part, perhaps, because it was able to defer some of its decisions.

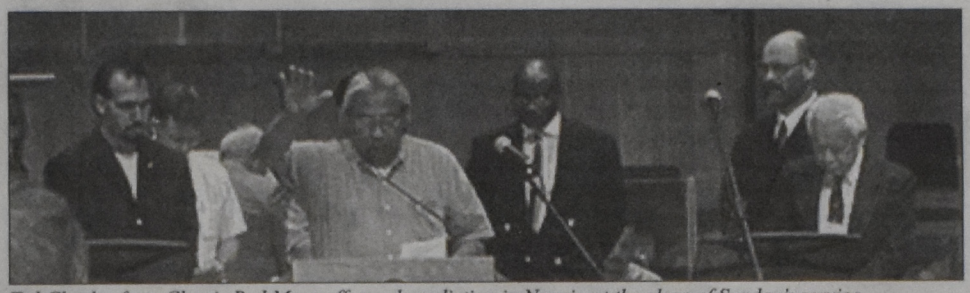
In the past anyone who wanted to enter the ministry of the CRC was required to spend at least one year at Calvin Seminary. But this is a considerable financial burden for many students, especially for those from Canada. Moreover, many entering the ministry nowadays already have families, so uprooting them creates many hardships. As a result, a number of those in the CRC aspiring to the ministry have gone to other seminaries – and ended up in other denominations. Of the 31 candidates approved this year, 5 got most of their training at other seminaries.

The CRC has also become much more multi-ethnic, so ways have to be found to bring in pastors from other ethnic backgrounds. There are too few available who have come by way of Calvin Seminary.

However, as the denomination seeks to open more ways into the ministry, some fear it may let slip its confessional integrity and its unity. The writers of the report on Alternate Routes to Ministry wrestled with those questions, producing a 60 page report in the process. Synod also wrestled, often tempted to hammer out details of the complex proposal on the floor of synod. But temptation was overcome and the task of working out the details was left to a committee, a favorite CRC strategy.

Ideological clashes were avoided by seeking ways to compromise so that the needed flexibility could be implemented without surrendering excellence and confessional integrity. Instead of being required to spend a full year at the Seminary, in the future candidates from other seminaries with have to spend only one quarter plus a summer session at Calvin. Distance courses will be made available over the internet, course requirements will be made more flexible, and so on.

The Board of Trustees will work out the details in cooperation with Calvin Seminary and the committee that wrote the report. A special committee (yes, more bureaucracy) was created – the Synodical Ministry Credential Committee (SMCC – another acronym) – which will supervise those working towards the ministry outside of Calvin Seminary.



Ted Charles from Classis Red Mesa offers a benediction in Navajo at the close of Sunday's service.

So Calvin Seminary will no longer be the sole agency to vet ministers for the CRC. However, it will continue to play a strong role in shaping the minds of future pastors in the denomination. The report had recommended that supervisory teams be created at the classis level, but that was considered too cumbersome by the delegates and didn't pass. Neither did the proposal to create a list of other seminaries approved for pastor training alongside Calvin. Calvin Seminary continues as the preferred route to ministry in the CRC.

Zacharias Ursinus

Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 80 will be changed. We cannot go on calling the Roman Catholic (RC) celebration of the mass a "condemnable idolatry" the delegates agreed. The report submitted to synod didn't satisfy everyone. It made some subtle theological distinctions, ones that need to be made, but how relevant are they?

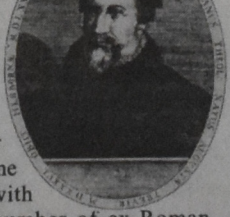
The report argued that official RC teaching does not really deny the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ and that the mass isn't really a matter of sacrificing Christ all over again. Nor are the elements worshipped as though they embody Christ. Catholics have a more mystical sense of what transpires during the Lord's Supper: somehow the mass becomes a participation in that one sufficient sacrifice Christ made on the cross. And in the elevation of the mass, it isn't the elements that are being worshipped but Christ himself.

The writers of the report met with Roman Catholic theologians, who said the Catechism's description of the mass is inaccurate. They said the description of the mass offered in the report was fair.

Were the Reformers, therefore, wrong when they condemned the mass as idolatry? No, argues the report: the Reformers were condemning not just official teachings but also and especially the practice of the day. And this was shaped by superstition.

And it still is today in many countries, argued some, especially some who hailed from Latin America, where most Roman Catholics live, they pointed out. There ordinary priests and millions of Catholics still celebrate the mass as it was celebrated at the time of the writing of the Heidelberg Catechism. There the Catechism's statement still applies. To drop the condemnation from the confession, they suggested, is to focus too exclusively on the Northern scene and to close the church's eyes to the sufferings of brothers and sisters in the South who still suffer persecution at the hands of the Catholic Church.

"It is ironic that we want to change our confessions to be in good relationship with a church that will never see us as a proper church," observed Mariano Avila, a professor at Calvin Seminary.



On the other hand, some pastors with a large number of ex-Roman Catholics in their congregations (one pastor said almost one-fourth of his members were ex-RC) said the phrase was a stumbling block and offense to them. They insist they were not committing idolatry in the past and that their friends and family are not doing so now. "They feel extremely judged by this sort of language," said John Tenyenhuis, a Canadian delegate.

Besides, urged George Vandervelde, one of the authors of the report, "It's not in the nature of confession to bash someone over the head."

In the end, synod agreed with the report that Q & A 80 no longer apply and that a change is in order. Several options were considered (Put it in a footnote? Delete it altogether?), but rather than decide exactly what action to take, synod opted for further feedback – from CRC members as well as from other Reformed denominations that have the Catechism among their standards. The question will be submitted to the Reformed Ecumenical Council, the CRC's main ecumenical contact.

An overture by John Bolt, a prof at Calvin Seminary, asking the church to study the phenomenon of "Third Wave Pentecostalism" was destined to be skimmed over until Bolt stood up and made an impassioned plea for it. The synodical advisory committee had dealt with his overture by pointing to the report on pentecostalism adopted in 1973 and suggesting that a few articles in The Banner might suffice.

No way, argued Bolt. Third Wave Pentecostalism exhibits traits very different from the Pentecostalism of 30-40 years ago. Many CRC members have become involved in Dunamis Ministries, and Neil Anderson has been invited to conduct seminars in some churches. These ministries talk a lot about "spiritual warfare" in unfamiliar ways and of confronting demons. This was not part of Pentecostalism in the '70s. The views of the Holy Spirit and of the Kingdom of God behind this broad and diverse movement needs to be examined, insisted Bolt.

His plea triggered a loose and wide-ranging discussion in which some spoke glowingly about extraordinary things they had experienced, others complained they'd never heard of it (So how can it be important?), and still others talked about everything from the Left Behind series of novels to music festivals for Christian young people. (Alas, a couple of pastors even confessed to enjoying the novels of Frank Peretti.)

While some spoke of the "new" movement as an awakening, others saw it as something to be "nipped in the bud," especially among our young people. An ethnic advisor who had spent time in Sri Lanka testified that this kind of Pentecostalism was very strong there and urged the CRC to discuss "how to tame the beast and put a Reformed cloak on it." A delegate from Sarnia suggested we must choose – "either ride the wave or else it will crash over you." (You wouldn't expect a surfer analogy from Sarnia, would you?)

Several delegates complained that the category was much too fuzzy: it seemed to encompass everything from the Vineyard Fellowship with its giggling services to the dispensationalism of the Left Behind books.

Although some were of the opinion that the 1973 report still covered the bases quite well, synod got enough of a sense that there are new things blowing in the wind to justify a study committee. And a study committee there will be, so look forward to hearing more about Third Wave Pentecostalism.

Quite a few delegates were on edge about what has been transpiring in Classis Toronto in relation to First Toronto CRC, which had declared it was opening its offices to homosexuals living in committed same-sex relationships. At classis' urging, by stages it retreated from its initial unilateral action, admitting that the way it had chosen was not edifying to the church.

This has not allayed the anxiety of opponents, some of whom want to see stronger disciplinary action taken. But, synod decided, the procedures spelled out in the church order are being followed. It is being addressed on the classis level. Intervening now would be improper.

Being biblical and confessional while ministering to those who interpret biblical injunctions quite differently can be extremely difficult, cautioned a delegate. He asked, can the church be like

Politics

Nigeria... *continued from page 1*

Pam asked why Obasanjo did not act to check incessant attacks on Christians that provoked the bloodshed in Yelwa in the first place.

Obasanjo

"President Obasanjo came to Plateau to find a solution to the problem on the invitation of other sects, especially the Muslims," Pam told journalists. "However, when Christians were killed earlier, we paid him a courtesy call and nothing happened. He didn't come here, neither was there any prompt action on his part.

"So, we feel it is one-sided. When the president came, I put the question to him ... but he flew into a rage and began to call me an 'idiot.'"

Obasanjo later apologized to Pam for the remark, blaming the misunderstanding on a breakdown of communication with CAN leaders. The incident is one of several that illustrate the complexities of finding lasting solutions to the religious conflict in Africa's most populous country.

Christian leaders suspicious

In another incident, Christian leaders rejected an invitation from their Muslim counterparts to meet in Kaduna on May 31, to discuss ways to resolve the continued violence.

Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, the Sultan of Sokoto who is considered the head of Muslims in Nigeria, had summoned Christian clergy to the meeting. Saidu Dogo, CAN national secretary general, told journalists that if Christian leaders were to meet with Muslim leaders, it would amount to placing Christians in northern Nigeria under Islamic imperialism.

"The participation of northern Christian leaders and Christian traditional rulers in the meeting will amount to surrendering their sovereignty to the Sokoto Caliphate or the Sultanate," Dogo said.

"The motives of the meeting are suspicious. We have made our position clear that only the Nigerian government can call an all-embracing meeting like this," he added.

"They want us to surrender our sovereignty to the Sultan; that is not going to happen. This is what is causing the problem in Plateau and other states," Dogo said.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria are dying and losing loved ones. Thousands more have lost homes and livelihoods. The National Emergency Management Agency reported last month that a total of 69,000 people in the states of Bauchi, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau are living as displaced refugees.

Unless the leaders of Nigeria's respective religious communities can come to some sort of understanding, it appears the refugees will not be going home anytime soon.

See related story on page 6.

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

No to capital punishment, but ...

Several years ago in this space I wrote a column opposing the call, heard in some quarters, to revive capital punishment in Canada. This was in the wake of the publicity surrounding Carla Faye Tucker, who had committed a grisly murder in Texas, had been convicted of the crime and was sentenced to death. While in prison she was converted to faith in Jesus Christ. Then-Governor George W. Bush refused to intervene to commute her sentence, despite their apparent shared membership in the Body of Christ, and she went to her death, confident she would soon be in the presence of her Redeemer.

At the time I did not and still do not dispute the justice of the death penalty. In fact, it is almost perfectly just if imposed on one who has wrongly taken another life. Instead, I argued against reinstating it for two reasons. First, given that our criminal justice systems are prone to error, as evidenced most famously in the cases of David Milgard, Donald Marshall and Guy Paul Morin here in Canada, it would be unwise – indeed unjust – to impose so obviously irreversible a punishment. Second, thinking of Tucker again, prematurely ending a life cuts short the possibility of a genuine repentance that might come further down the road during a sentence of life imprisonment. The etymological connection between *penitence* and *penitentiary* points to the fact that the latter, at least in theory, provides a setting in which the former might occur.

I still agree with what I wrote then. Yet in the ensuing years I have come to wonder whether a refusal to face even the possibility of capital punishment might tend to erode a sense of justice and, along with it, the seriousness of sin and redemption. There is, after all, something that makes sense about offering a life for a life. Among other things, justice is about restoring balance in relationships among persons. Where a life has been wrongfully taken, another must be offered up.

Central to Christianity is the belief that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) and that the shed blood of Jesus Christ, uniquely God and man, pays for our sins. Short of this payment, we ourselves must die. Is it possible that a society that has lost sight of the intrinsic justice of "life for life" will tend to reduce justice to a mere sentimentality refusing to make necessary judgements for fear of causing offence? Will it too quickly appeal to mercy without understanding that genuine mercy finds its source in a sincere repentance borne of a deep sense of justice? Will it find it increasingly difficult to understand why the death of God's Son was made necessary by our sins?

Some people have sought to downplay the retributive element in justice. They sometimes argue that punishment itself is a barbarous concept rooted in a primitive desire for revenge. In a recent article on Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, the Jesus Seminar's notorious John Dominic Crossan was quoted as stating that he could not assent to a theology affirming a God who would punish his own Son. Crossan's preferred deity is a god of mercy. Yet what he forgets – as Gibson has not – is that, apart from the pains of judgement, mercy degenerates into mere indifference and anomie.

Although I would still oppose reintroducing the death penalty in Canada, it might be appropriate that the law mandate a judge to inform one convicted of murder that he or she *deserves* death but will receive life imprisonment instead.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of Political Visions and Illusions *(InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at:* <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.

Synod 2004 ... *continued*

Jesus – seeking out and fellowshiping with sinners without compromising the way to leading a godly life?

Synod decided to change *The Banner*, the denominational magazine, from a subscription supported publication to one paid for by the church as a whole. Beginning in April 2005, every household in the CRC will receive *The Banner* "free" of charge.

Although it was recently trimmed back from a bi-weekly to a monthly, synod was told, the magazine will have to fold within a few years, as subscribers keep dwindling. Most delegates were reluctant to see that happen, not just out of attachment to an institution that has been a vital link to the denomination for so long, but because its loss might lead to a further erosion of the unity and identity of the CRC. Where else do members get an overview of the whole? And where else do they participate in debates important to the life of the church as a whole? The Banner, synod decided, is too important to the identity of the CRC to let it die.

Bob de Moor, who was appointed as interim editor of The Banner after the resignation of John Suk, was interviewed for the position of editor and appointed with very little discussion.

A discussion about pensions, particularly for evangelists, and the burden imposed on small churches to pay for them drew some strong rhetoric. Several spoke passionately that it's about justice. However, last year's synod sought to raise one million to help small churches – without much luck. Since the money doesn't seem to be forthcoming, synod concluded, there is little more that can be done to remedy the situation.

This year the CC editor chose the path of frugality and did not attend synod. (They won't let me stay in the dorms, so I have to pay for a motel. In US dollars.) I was able to follow most of the debates over the internet. The webcast malfunctioned a couple of times and so did my computer, but most of the time it came across loud and clear. I also owe a tip of the hat to the news releases sent out by Henry Hesse and to the stories that appeared in the Grand Rapids Press. I did not miss the G.R. coffee.

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Editorial

The good news and politics

Harry der Nederlanden

As people live closer together, as technology connects them more closely, and as people move about and mingle with those of very different backgrounds and beliefs, more and more "issues" enter the realm of politics.

I was struck by that fact during this election. When I first became politically aware in high school, many things that are political issues now weren't even on the radar then. Abortion was talked about, but purely as a religious and moral issue. It was a topic for Young People Society: 'Is there any circumstance in which abortion is morally justified?' The issue ranked way up there with: 'If you were hiding Jews from the Nazis, is it okay to lie?'

Gay marriage was even further off the horizon. We had barely acknowledged there was such a thing as homosexuality. In fact, sexuality itself was just becoming a topic of conversation, and then usually only to let us know there was such a thing.

This wasn't because we were morally better in the fifties or that we had better manners. More of us in this society shared a common ethos, a way of seeing things. We knew a baby was a baby whether it had been born yet or not. So morally abortion involved weighing a life against a life. We knew sex was for married folk to make a family if they could. And it was something so private and intimate – and embarrassing – that you didn't talk about it unless you were telling a joke, and then only obliquely.

Homosexuality did not refer to a way of being but to acts of perversion committed by those who were crossing over into the darkness. Interestingly, because it was so far off the radar, people were less anxious about it too. At the YMCA, for example, a little same-sex hanky-panky was considered part of adolescence. It didn't make parents freak out. They just kicked your little behind. (It was the boy-girl stuff that got you into real trouble.)

Abortion and homosexuality were discussed in books on theological ethics but entirely within the orbit of personal morality. It could become more than that, of course. The law enforced the common understanding, which was not perceived as sectarian but truly common, and getting an abortion or engaging in homosexual acts could land you in court and even in jail. But when you were talking politics, you were talking about something else.

The personal and the political

There's something of a paradox here. At a time when these matter were considered personal, not political issues, they were enforced by law. The limits were clearly proscribed. When the common understanding dissolved and the boundaries became uncertain, issues that were formerly private became political. Now they've become hot points of political debate and are talked about constantly. Things formerly unsaid are now the center of conversation. They were loaded before, but now they are loaded in an entirely different way.

At one time, most people assumed that these matters belonged to a realm of natural or divinely ordained order. Theologians and lawyers might debate how the norms or laws applied, but this commonly acknowledged order was the starting point. As our society became more diverse, however, people naturally become more doubtful about what actually is natural or divinely ordained. They began to question their inherited universe. They began to wonder whether anything is written in the heavens.

As soon as you get a community of diverse communities, you have to hash out such matters. And politics is to a great extent nothing more than an on-going conversation about how to handle such differences.

So everything can become a matter of politics. It is the alternative to suppressing differences by force. People representing different communities get together to talk and to figure out how communities with conflicting understandings can live together without open conflict and with a minimum of friction. And the greater the diversity the more issues arise that need to be hashed out.

Building roads

Let me use more neutral examples. I like to read about pioneering days and the opening of the West. One of the fascinating thing about that period is seeing how quickly institutions, political and otherwise, spring up – often simply out of neighborly cooperation.

At one time people could start farms out in the middle of nowhere. But it didn't remain nowhere for long. If you planted corn and wheat, you needed to be able to take it to market. You also needed to be able to fetch supplies on a regular basis. In short, you needed a road. No matter how independent-minded you might be, you realized that it took more than one person to make a road. Before long, you and your neighbors wanted to make sure that everyone contributed fairly in maintaining that road. In no time at all, there was a county government and everyone was paying taxes.

You surrendered part of your independence because you were obligated to pay taxes. But in exchange you had greater freedom of movement. And it was easier to make a living.

The roads connected you to your neighbors, to town and to the railroad. They made you more dependent, but your life became more human. You became part of something larger, of a community.

But if you wanted a bridge built over the river so you could cross it during Spring run-off, you had to talk your neighbors into it, perhaps through the local council. You had to engage in politics.

Building fences

Let's look at a different example. The first farmers to move out onto the Great Central Plains were cattlemen. They just turned their cows loose on the grass and let them graze till they could be trotted off to the nearest railhead. Erecting fences wasn't practical, so they branded their cattle to mark their property rights. The next wave of farmers, however, wanted to raise crops, not just cattle. They plowed up the grass and erected fences. And right away there was friction between two different ways of life. (It's still happening in Africa today.)

The friction led to violence and killing. And then they began to talk and to seek compromise. Politics enabled ranchers and farmers to live side by side. The invention of barbed wire helped. Politics builds fences as well as roads. Politics seeks to create an area of agreement so people can go their different, sometimes opposing, ways without clashing.

Political evangelism

The connections we talk about nowadays are much more complex and connect many more people. But the fundamental motions remain the same. Politics is part of being a good neighbor. It is, therefore, not something from which Christians can withdraw to focus on something more holy. It belongs to their calling to serve God and neighbor. This duality is so closely bound together in Scripture, we should hyphenate it: serving God-and-neighbor.

Recently more and more church leaders have been urging Christians to focus less on politics and social issues and more on evangelism and personal piety. It is true that politics is not about making your neighbor serve God. In fact, we are not doing good politics if we impose biblical norms on others. Quite the contrary. Politics is about creating the space in which the other is free to serve – or not – in his own way. Sometimes that makes it seem as if our politics and our evangelism are working at cross purposes. We defend the rights of Muslims to worship freely as much as possible even when we see Islam as a false religion. Similarly, we defend the rights of homosexuals to be treated fairly in our society. We do not, however, stop evangelizing Muslims or calling homosexuals to a biblical way of life.

In the gay marriage debate, for example, the heart of the Reformed case centers around the fact that marriage predates government. It was not created by government decree, nor is it the government that binds two people in marriage. Yet, Christians must join in the political process of defining marriage – as though it were something shaped by human lawmakers.

Ultimately, what we seek to do, in evangelism as well as government, with words as well as with laws, is to defer to ultimate reality, that is, to God. Without his gracious power, our words remain powerless. Without his providential power, human bonds and institutions crumble or become oppressive. Politics is not evangelism, but like evangelism, it is an invocation: it asks God to intervene in our lives and to hold together what we cannot by our own strength. At bottom, politics is also prayer.

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Education

Alberta's creative models for educational justice

Before Ontario re-hitches its cart to tax credits, school choice advocates should survey emerging policy options

John Hiemstra and Robert Brink

The recent cancellation of the Equity in Education Tax Credit was a major setback for those seeking educational justice for Ontario. The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) and other supporters of faith-based schools put in many hours and a great deal of resources to secure this measure of justice. Loosing hundreds of dollars of public funding per student at this late hour was certainly a major blow. While lobbying to restore the refundable tax credit is clearly an option, other models of securing just funding for faith-based schooling also exist.

Alberta's diverse system of systems, for example, allow over a quarter of the province's students to choose schooling that incorporates some form of faith-based programs or practices. While each of these models has strengths and weaknesses, examining the full range of options can stimulate our imaginations about what is possible under contemporary school policies. Like Ontario, Alberta has more than one type of school authority. In fact, Alberta has not one but four types of public school authorities – there are 42 public, 17 separate, 13 charter, and 5 francophone school systems – and only charter schools are required to be secular! Furthermore, Alberta has three other types of schooling: independent or private schools eligible for partial public funding, home schooling which can secure limited grants, and aboriginal schools run by First Nations on reserves, which are regulated and funded by the Federal government. This amazingly diverse structure allows Albertans of various faiths – Catholic, Muslim, Jewish and Protestant Christian – to choose some form of faith-based schooling.

Public School Authorities

In Alberta, the school authorities that formally appropriate the name Public, and today frequently act as though they are secularised programs, in fact offer a variety of faith-based programs. In recent years, we have seen Alberta Public schools establish 'alternative programs' to meet non-standard needs within the Public school structure. These include Mont-essori, all-girls, classical, arts and high performance athletics programs. Calgary School District, Alberta's largest Public school board with 99,572 students, spearheaded faith-based alternative programs in the early 1970s. After political turbulence in 1983, the Calgary Board cancelled its agreements with faith-based alternatives, which included 2 Christian and 2 Jewish programs.

In 1988, however, the School Act was amended to specifically enable local boards to establish religious alternative schools and

programs where numbers warrant. Today, most Alberta school boards offer some form of alternative programs, and 10 of 42 public boards offer at least one faith-based program.

The Edmonton Public School Board has developed the most advanced system of faith-based alternative programs. One major feature of their system is the Logos Christian Alternative Program, which is "based on a traditional approach to instruction within a Christian environment grounded in Christian principles." It is now offered to more than 1290 students in eight schools. Elk Island Public School Regional Division also offers the Logos Christian program, as does St. Albert Protestant Separate School Division, an otherwise secular system. Parkland School Division offers the Maranatha Alternative Program, which is similar to Logos. These school divisions responded to expressed parental demand in creating these programs; none of them existed independent of the public system.

In addition to these explicitly faith-based programs, many public boards offer language, cultural and various aboriginal programs, some of which have significant religious or spiritual dimensions.

The other major feature of Edmonton Public's faith-based alternative program initiative, of even more interest to Christian school supporters, is the practice of 'adopting' formerly independent faith-based schools and placing them under the administrative umbrella of the public system. In 1999, Edmonton Christian School, a well-established school in the Reformed Christian tradition – with three campuses, a fifty-year history, and more than 800 students – joined Edmonton Public as an alternative program, as did the evangelical Millwoods Christian School. Meadowlark Christian School has recently followed. The Talmud Torah School, a Jewish school founded in 1912, entered administrative and funding arrangements with Edmonton Public in 1975, and continues to function as an alternative school under this board. Red Deer Christian School, another school in the Reformed tradition, now operates under the umbrella of Red Deer Public School District and is called Red Deer Christian Alternative Program. Lethbridge School District and Wild Rose School Division have each also 'adopted' formerly independent Christian schools. Elk Island Division, whose faith-based options are utilised by 1,349 of its 16,244 students, has partnered with two formerly independent Christian Schools. Neerlandia Christian School is a precursor to the faith-based alternative school trend. Located in a predominately Reformed Dutch farming community, this school has successfully operated as a Christian public school since 1917. The Peace River School Division, St. Paul Education Regional Division, and Prairie Rose Regional Division operate similar types of Christian schools or programs in areas with high geographic concentrations of Mennonites.

Beyond these alternative programs, 24 of Alberta's 42 public school districts provide Hutterite Colony Schools. Hutterites are followers of the European Ana-baptist reformer, Jakob Hutter, who started a form of communal Christian living in 1528. They moved to Canada in 1918. Hutterites are pacifist, reject most contemporary fashions, live on communal farms where they hold all things in common, and believe in the full separation of church and state. Taught by public school teachers who most often are not Hutterite, their schools are faith-based primarily in the sense that they offer after-school religion classes and exclusively serve a single faith community. A total of 153 public schools educate 3109 Hutterite students. All told, at least 11,358 Alberta students in school systems officially labelled "Public" are enrolled in programs that can be identified to some degree as faith-based. They all receive full or almost full public funding.

Roman Catholic Separate Systems

Alberta treats Separate school systems as a second type of public school authority. There are seventeen Separate school boards in the province, sixteen of which are Roman Catholic. The St. Albert Public Board is the seventeenth Catholic board, since early legislation designated the first board created in each district as "Public," whether Catholics or Protestants founded it. All Catholic schools are fully funded. Including the students in Catholic schools under the auspices of an amalgamated Public/Catholic board in the St. Paul region, 128,184 students are in fully funded English language Catholic Schools.

Francophone School Authorities

The third type of public authority in Alberta is the French language school systems. In 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada ordered Alberta to provide franco-phone communities with parent-controlled French schooling. Today, five small school divisions offer francophone education in Alberta (in addition to many French-immersion programs run by public and separate schools). Surprisingly, three of these francophone divisions are now overtly Catholic, as are many of the individual francophone schools.

Charter School Authorities

The fourth category of public school authority, Charter schools, was created by legislation in 1994. Ten Charter schools educated 2870 students in 2001-2002. Since

See **Creative models** *on p.6...*

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Creative Models ... *continued from p.5*

the law explicitly prevents these schools from being "religious in nature," most have opted for an academic, pedagogical, or arts focus.

Independent Schools

Besides the four public authorities receiving full government funding, a number of independent or private school authorities in Alberta are faith-based and nearly all receive partial government funding. Most religious independent schools are Protestant Christian. The majority are affiliated with two groups: the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), an evangelical Protestant organization, and the Prairie Association of Christian Schools (PACS), an organization with Reformed Christian roots and affiliated with Christian Schools International. A third large group, also evangelical, make use of the American conservative "Accelerated Christian Education" (ACE) curriculum. Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventist groups also operate a significant number of schools, and there are also several non-affiliated Calvinist (e.g. Canadian Reformed and Netherlands Reformed), Mennonite and Evangelical independent schools. Besides the Protestant schools, there are 3 Jewish schools, 2 Islamic schools, 2 independent Catholic schools, and 1 Punjabi Cultural School (Sikh).

All of these schools are government accredited and receive partial funding at a rate that is currently about 38% of the per student grant given to the four types of public authorities. This amounts to approximately $3000 per student per year.

Early Childhood Services (kindergarten) programs are fully funded in Alberta, including kindergarten programs either associated with a larger independent school or entirely independent. Some of the free-standing kindergartens are religiously identified, including Mennonite, Salvation Army and Khalsa schools. Special-needs students in independent schools, including those in faith-based schools, are also funded at the same level as those in public schools.

Another ten small faith-based schools, mostly Mennonite, are registered with the government, but receive no government funding.

Neerlandia Public Christian School

Funding for independent schools is based on a number of criteria. First, schools receiving funding must hire teachers with an Alberta Teaching Certificate. Since various faith-based post-secondary institutions, including The King's University College in Edmonton, are authorised to grant the B.Ed. degrees required to obtain certification, this criteria has not been troublesome for most CSI schools. Other institutions, such as the Prairie Bible Institute (Evangelical), Taylor University College (North American Baptist), and St. Mary's University College (Roman Catholic) offer accredited training towards this certification, but are not yet able to offer a full B.Ed. degree. Teachers trained at Christian Universities in other provinces or in the United States can usually receive certification, often with little or no additional training.

Secondly, to receive funding, independent schools must use approved curriculum [usually the Alberta Program of Study adapted in various ways], and be subject to provincial testing. Most of the Christian Schools in the Reformed tradition, including the two schools operated by the Calgary Society for Christian Education with a combined 750 students, operate as funded and accredited independent schools.

One hundred and seven of a total 327 independent schools, with 17,806 students, [or 62% of the independent school students,] are faith-based. Most independent schools that are not faith-based are either kindergartens, special-needs schools, philosophical/pedagogical schools, or academic schools. Only a few of Alberta's independent schools are 'elite' schools.

Home Education

In 1988, the Alberta government amended the School Act to allow homeschooling. Parents must affiliate with either public or independent school authority. 13,076 students in Alberta were home educated in 2001-2002. Many home education students are registered with faith-based schools, including over a thousand with a single Christian school in Northern Alberta. Some public school districts have begun offering faith-based home education programs on the Internet. The supervising school board receives $1,143 per homeschooling student from the government, of which at least fifty percent must be passed on to the parent to cover education-related costs.

Aboriginal Schools

Aboriginal schools are funded by the Federal government and are operated by the local band council on the reserve. Many offer programs with significant cultural and spiritual content.

Conclusion

In 2001-2002, 159,038 Alberta students, or 26.9% of the total student population of 590,904, were enrolled in programs that were, to some degree, faith-based. Most of these students – those in Catholic schools and in alternative public schools – were fully funded, and nearly all the rest receive significant public funding.

It is difficult to account for this diversity of faith-based school choice in Alberta and for the accompanying access to at least partial public funding. At least one answer is clear: it does not result from Alberta being a highly religious province. In fact, Alberta is not Canada's "Bible Belt" as many Canadians assume. Albertans are the second most likely to say they have "no religion" on surveys and Albertans attend religious services at among the lowest rates in Canada.

One message that advocates of school choice and fair funding may glean from this diversity of faith-based programs, however, is that a variety of types of structural arrangements for accommodating faith-based schools are indeed possible. Although the current Alberta system is far from perfect, its rejection of "one size fits all," either religiously or structurally, is encouraging to all who think there should be no wall separating religion and schooling.

Ensuring that structures are created in the long term to protect the rights of educational minorities should be the priority of school choice advocates. Knowing the types of options that are starting to develop in other provinces may help Ontario develop new innovative policy options its diverse communities. While Alberta's options continue to need reform to further protect the integrity of faith-based schooling, they are promising signs of educational justice.

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Nigerian town riots on anniversary of preacher's murder

Churches, mosques destroyed in religious violence

Obed Minchakpu

YOLA, Nigeria (Compass) – Violence broke out between Muslims and Christians in the town of Numan in the northeastern state of Adamawa on June 8, resulting in the deaths of at least nine people. According to police reports from the state capital of Yola, places of worship belonging to both faiths were destroyed in the clash.

At press time, police have arrested 42 people in connection with the violence. Unconfirmed reports from Adamawa claim at least 50 died in the Numan conflict, which marked to the day the one-year anniversary of the murder of a Christian preacher in the town.

On June 8, 2003, Mohammed Salisu, a Muslim, stabbed to death Christian pastor Mrs. Esther Jinkai Ethan as she was returning home from a session of street evangelism in Numan.

Violent clashes between Muslims and Christians following Ethan's murder left 10 people dead and caused damage to churches and mosques in the town.

Tensions between adherents of the two religious groups in Numan have escalated in recent weeks. Muslims insist on rebuilding a mosque destroyed in the 2003 riot but Christians in the town object, contending that the mosque site is too near the house of a prominent Christian community leader and to the town's Lutheran cathedral.

Christians constitute over 99 percent of the town's population, according to sources. Church and political leaders allege that Muslim agitators are manipulating the unrest to gain political advantage.

"The government has discovered plans by some people to use politics and religion to foment trouble in the state," Adamawa Governor Boni Haruna said in a radio and television broadcast on May 28.

Some analysts think the militants are emboldened by the Nigerian government's decision last month to declare a state of emergency in the central state of Plateau and dismiss Plateau governor Joshua Dariye, a Christian. Muslim leaders are promoting religious conflict to destabilize Adamawa, they say, in hopes of removing Haruna from office. Governor Haruna is also a Christian.

Since 1984, when an Islamic sect known as the *Maitatsine* emerged on the religious scene in the state, Adamawa has been a rallying point for Islamic fundamentalists. In November last year, police authorities reported the discovery of a factory in the village of Loko that was producing weapons for Muslim militants to use in attacks on Christians.

Opinion

Gay marriage: Christians keep avoiding the real issue

Jon Dykstra

Moral arguments against abortion didn't seem to be working so a Canadian pro-life group decided to try a different approach. Their new argument went something like this: "Did you know that abortions cost $800 a piece? In a single year taxpayers in this province had to pay more than $4 million to fund this procedure! Isn't it about time the government took their fiscal responsibilities seriously and stopped funding abortion?"

Money was the focus, and God, morality, and the humanity of the unborn were never mentioned. Again and again the $800 figure and the $4 million total were repeated in newspaper ads, radio spots and news releases. But the end of this stratagem came quickly and suddenly. A clever abortion advocate did a little digging and discovered that live births cost the government roughly $1800 a piece, so every abortion was actually saving the government $1000. It was all clear now – supporting abortion was the fiscally responsible thing to do!

Since the pro-life group had avoided all mention of morality they had nothing to fall back on. If abortion was wrong primarily because of its fiscal cost – and this was certainly the impression the pro-lifers had left with their barrage of advertising – then abortion was perfectly acceptable as long if it made fiscal sense. But, as we all know, abortion is not wrong because it is costly but because it is the killing of precious human beings. That is, in fact, the only reason abortion is evil and all other arguments are really red herrings that are totally beside the point.

Any foundation but God

In the gay marriage debate the same sort of thing is happening. Christians are desperately avoiding any arguments that mention God or morality. Instead they are relying on secular arguments that, while they initially seem convincing, ultimately don't measure up. For example:

"Marriage has been this way for thousands of years, so why change it now?"

Slavery was also in vogue for millennia; does that mean it was right? In fact, slavery is still a firmly entrenched "tradition" in some parts of the world and yet, despite this status, we know it is wrong. So tradition for tradition's sake isn't much of an argument.

"Gay marriage will undermine traditional Marriage"

This argument has some validity but our opponents have a pretty compelling response to it; they accuse us of hypocrisy, and this attack hits close to home. If we really cared about traditional marriage – the whole life-long commitment thing – then why didn't we speak up when the government instituted no-fault divorce? Or when they started encouraging common-law "marriage" by giving these no-commitment couples most of the financial benefits of marriage? We sure didn't react then with the same fervor we're exhibiting now, fighting gay marriage. Why is that? Will same-sex marriage ever undermine the institution as much as no-fault divorce already has?

"The courts are forcing gay marriage on us – MP's are supposed to write our laws, not unelected judges!"

Yes, MP's are supposed to write our laws, but that's not really the issue here. Are we worried about who makes the changes or about what is being changed? Will we be satisfied when the Prime Minister and his MP's, rather than judges, redefine the institution? No? Then this objection is nothing more than a red herring – a side issue brought in to confuse things. Let's get back to debating the real issue please!

"Most Canadians are against changing Marriage"

This is another shortsighted argument – a clear example of building a house on a foundation of sand (Matthew 7:24-27). Perhaps most Canadians are against gay marriage right now but what about in a few years? Besides, as Christians we know that just because most people think a certain way, that doesn't mean that way is right. Or as my mother used to say, "If all the other boys jumped off a bridge, would you too?" Instead of focusing on what's popular, we need to start talking about what's right.

One good argument

There is only one good argument against gay marriage: Since God created the institution of Marriage, he gets to decide what it is, and what it isn't. Admittedly atheists and agnostics may not like this argument, and even many Christians find it unattractive, but it has one thing going for it that none of the other arguments do – it is true. By building our argument on God's sure foundation – by being unapologetically Christian – we can contrast godly marriage with the poor, sickly imitation the world is proposing. We can show them that if marriage isn't built on a godly foundation, it has no foundation at all.

A different foundation?

The world thinks they can replace God's standard for marriage with a new, improved standard. God's version of marriage is too exclusive, too bigoted even – marriage shouldn't be discriminatory, we are told. Justice Minster Martin Cauchon made that point when he argued for gay marriage saying, "There was a time in Canada, not that long ago, when it was perfectly acceptable that women could not vote." In other words, since it was wrong to discriminate against women it must therefore be wrong to discriminate against gays on the basis of their sexual orientation.

But where does this new standard – that discrimination is always wrong – take us? Yes, gays will be allowed to marry, but this new standard justifies more than just gay marriage. After all, if two men can marry, why not three?

Some say this is a ridiculous thought, but what about the bisexual? Aren't we discriminating against her on the basis of her sexual orientation when we require her to marry only one gender or the other?

And what of homosexual couples who want to have children? These couples, by necessity, require a third individual to propagate. For example, in New York, lesbian Beth Niernberg lives with two gay men who have both had a son by her. The three of them co-parent the boys, and the trio have an agreement in place that should Ms. Niernberg find a suitable woman the group will become a quartet.

Suddenly we've entered the realm of polygamy, and, really, it only makes sense. If you reject God's limits to marriage then there's no reason to have limits at all. After all, if two men can marry, why not three? Or for that matter, why not one? In the Netherlands Jennifer Hoes decided to end her wait for the perfect man or woman, and instead married herself. And in France the government took a lesson from our Prime Minster Trudeau and decided, "the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation." Therefore they will now grant marital benefits to two heterosexual men who live together. After all, is it really fair to discriminate against them just because they aren't having sex? Of course not. If God's standard for marriage is rejected then absolutely anything is possible.

The way it was meant to be

The only anchor, the only firm foundation for marriage is found in God's design for the institution. His institution recognizes that men and women need each other, and that being male and female has real meaning beyond just our body parts. He knows that children need a mother and a father – parents who are committed to one another for life – so he hates divorce and adultery.

Over the last 30 years we've seen the damage done when we deviate from this standard. Instead of deviating further, isn't it about time we did something to restore this institution to the way God meant it to be? It isn't enough to be against gay marriage – it's time we stood up for godly marriage.

Endnotes

"The New Queer Family" by O'rya Hyde-Keller, *The Village Voice* June 25, 2003

"Faith: Woman marries herself" by Uwe Siemon-Netto, UPI March 12, 2003

In his article "The Fall of France: What gay marriage does to marriage" (*National Review* Nov. 8, 1999) David Frum notes that in France giving homosexuals the benefits of marriage leads to pressure to do the same for couplings of all types – two straight men, a priest and his housekeeper, two widowed sisters, etc. And since the priest may one day decide to get a new housekeeper, his "marriage" to her had to be one that was easily dissolvable. The end result was the creation of an alternative to marriage that is open to everyone, has all or most of the benefits, but doesn't have any of the obligations. It is a no commitment alternative.

Christian proponents of "civil unions" – who want to give all the benefits of marriage to homosexuals, while denying them only the name "marriage" – seem to be treading a similar path. So the question these Christians must ponder is this, if the government proposes an alternative to godly, committed, life-long marriage that has most of the rewards but none of the obligations or commitments, which do you think people will choose? Isn't this a sure way to undermine marriage?

In France even the dead can get married. In February this year Christelle Demichel married her fiancée, Eric Demichel, who had died 17 months earlier (*National Post* Feb 23, 2004). In the Bible we are told that the marriage ends with death (Romans 7:1-2), and that there will be no marriage at the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-30).

More food for thought – two political parties in the Netherlands recently asked the government to outlaw bestiality after a man was caught violating a pony (WORLD March 27, 2004). But as one parliamentarian explained, the politicians weren't worried about the inherent immorality of the act, but instead were concerned that the animal didn't consent. Zoe Heller, writing in the *National Post*, (April 5, 2004) made the same point when she insisted that there was one clear reason why people would never be allowed to marry pigs – because "you could never reliably gain the pig's consent."

This seems to be the secular world's best argument against bestiality. But what Zoe Heller and the Dutch politicians forget is that humans have never felt the need to procure consent from animals. Does a horse give consent to its rider? Does a chicken consent to be killed and eaten? Of course not. So why would we then require that animals consent to marriage? Once again it is clear that if God's standard for marriage is rejected then absolutely anything is possible.

Church

Six villagers arrested for tonsuring Christians in Orissa, India

Vishal Arora

DELHI (Compass) – Six people were arrested May 3 in a village in Orissa state in connection with a February incident in which the heads of a local pastor and eight Christian women were shaved in an effort to publicly mark them as Hindu converts.

The nine were dragged from their homes and forcibly "tonsured" or shaved on the crown of their heads, a mark that has religious significance in India and caused great humiliation for the Christians. Some of the 35 perpetrators were close relatives of the victims.

An arrest was finally made after social activist Priabir Kumar Das from the state capital filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on behalf of the victims.

Despite the arrests, the atmosphere in the Dalit hamlet of Bauri Sahi in Kilipal village remains tense. Pastor Subas Samal had previously been accused of "forced conversion" in a case involving two girls, who converted to Christianity some time ago and then left home when their families pressured them to reconvert to Hinduism.

"Forced conversion" is banned under the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act. However, Pastor Samal said in his statements to a local magistrate that the charges were fabricated. The girls presented an affidavit saying they had accepted the Christian faith and left home of their own free will.

Despite these claims, an arrest warrant has now been issued against Pastor Samal, just a few days after the six people responsible for tonsuring him were arrested.

Seven of the female victims and their families are still in temporary accommodations provided by the Church on Mount Zion in Bhubaneswar, the state capital. "The victims are eager, but unable, to go back to their homes in Kilipal village, as the tension between Christians and Hindus has not subsided yet," Rev. Sonathan Mohanty of the Church on Mount Zion told Compass. "All of them are strong in their faith and growing."

"This incident came to light only because the victims came to Bhubaneswar," he added. "Such incidents are common in the rural areas in Orissa, but they are not reported. We are praying for a shelter in the city, so persecuted Christians from such areas can take refuge and also report the matter."

The People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL), a secular human rights body, released a fact-finding report on the incident in April. The report confirmed that, "the fundamental rights of the Christians in the village to choose and practice their own faith, as enshrined in the Constitution, has been blatantly violated.... All this has to be seen in the backdrop of the prejudices, mistrust and misgivings that people harbor against other religions, in order to make any meaningful intervention and diffuse the existing tension."

The report also said the tonsuring was part of an ongoing campaign of religious hatred by *Hindutva* organizations. "The virulent campaign of communal hatred, religious intolerance and xenophobia unleashed by the so-called Hindutva forces in the state in recent times have reinforced and lent sustenance to the perpetrators of the vendetta against the hapless minorities."

The tonsured women

"The role of the police is questionable," the report claimed. "Their statements to the team reveal an inherent bias against the minorities; further, they are also full of inconsistencies. The local police station was well aware of the simmering tension, but did precious little to pre-empt the untoward incidents or diffuse the tension."

One of the tonsured women, Ms. Sanjukta Kandi, described the experience to investigators from the PUCL. "They came and forcibly dragged us to the center of the village.... We protested but we were forcibly dragged," she said. "I was in a sari only and had to cling to it when dragged ... you can imagine what it was like."

"After the tonsuring the whole day we stayed inside," she said. "We couldn't even collect water. How could we, when we were humiliated like this in public? How could we walk in the village with our tonsured head?"

Explaining why they had to leave the village, she said, "We could sense that the villagers were planning to do more dangerous things. They might just set fire to our house at night and we would all die."

The All India Christian Council issued a press statement on February 20, alleging that, "Physical violence against Christians continues across the nation – averaging over 200 recorded cases every year since 1998."

Christians can only hope the situation will change as the newly-elected Congress Party replaces the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), elected in 1998. The BJP appeared to allow Hindus to act with impunity against Christians.

One state of India repeals anti-conversion law after elections

Vishal Arora

DELHI (Compass) – Barely a week after India's Congress Party defeated the previous pro-Hindu government in national elections, Chief Minister Selvi J. Jayalalithaa of Tamil Nadu, southern India, has announced the repeal of the state anti-conversion law.

Her party (AIADMK) was soundly defeated in the general elections. On May 18, Jayalalithaa announced that she would drop the state's anti-conversion law. "I have ordered that the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Act 2002 be repealed at once," she said. "An ordinance for this purpose will be brought immediately."

The Tamil Nadu anti-conversion law was enacted on October 5, 2002, despite large-scale protests by the Christian minority and opposition parties.

It contained loose definitions and required all conversions to be registered with the state government. Without proper registration, both "converter" and "converted" could be jailed and fined as common criminals.

Christians form approximately six percent of the population in Tamil Nadu. They say the law was passed with intent to harass religious minorities and restrict missionary work in the state.

Defending her original decision to enact the law, Ms. Jayalalithaa said in a five-page statement released on May 18, "It was only with the good intention of further promoting religious harmony among all religions that my government enacted the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Act."

She also claimed that her state government had "always been the strongest champion of the rights and welfare of every minority community, be it Christians, Muslims or others.

"This act was never intended to be used against the minorities. However, as leaders of some minority communities have requested withdrawal of this law, I have ordered that it be repealed at once."

Hindu nationalists in the state have condemned Jayalalithaa's move. Rev. Richard Howell, general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, told Compass, "This is an answer to prayers offered by Christians everywhere. We are happy she is moving away from *Hindutva* [Hindu nationalism].

"This decision is a result of the fact that not only Christians, but the whole state including opposition parties, revolted against the anti-conversion law," he added. "It could be a pointer that minorities can, with the political parties, lobby for the repeal of similar acts in other states as well."

Dr. John Dayal, general secretary of the All India Christian Council, agreed that the move had raised hopes for further legislative change. "It is now clear that Jayalalithaa enacted the law not because there was a threat of large-scale forced or fraudulent conversions, but to please her allies in the Hindutva movement," he explained.

"We are shortly going to demand politically that the states of Orissa, Arunachal, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat repeal similar legislation. We are also considering approaching the new central government to enact central legislation which will bar any state from enacting future laws that curb freedom of faith or in any way erode constitutional guarantees to the minorities."

Churches in Africa declare war on HIV/AIDS and poverty

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) – Church leaders from 39 African countries, meeting in Nairobi, have declared an all out war against HIV/AIDS and poverty, two problems threatening to annihilate the continent's population.

"Africa has sounded a distress call to reverse depopulation of her people by the HIV/AIDS pandemic," members of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) said in a statement at the end of a three-day summit on 11 June. "The continent is in a chronic crisis of crippling poverty too."

The churches promised to close the gaps caused by denominationalism and develop common policies to end the culture of silence, which promotes stigmatization, inhibiting effective responses to prevention, care and counseling.

The churches want to see financial resources channeled directly to them, instead of always through non-governmental organizations since the reach of the religious institutions is wider than that of NGOs. With the resources they hope to make treatment available at church-supported hospitals, clinics, dispensaries and health posts.

"Everyone living with HIV/AIDS is a candidate for treatment. Today some 40 percent of health delivery facilities in Africa are owned by the churches," the Rev. Nyansanko-Ni-Nku, the AACC president who is a Presbyterian from Cameroon, told the media.

Promiscuity is not higher in Africa than in the rest of the world, but according to the leaders, the continent is much poorer than other continents, lacking the resources for HIV/AIDS intervention.

"We therefore condemn economic injustice and tendencies that reduce human beings to non-persons such that in their poverty they have become more vulnerable to the scourge. HIV/AIDS create more

See **War** *next column on page 9...*

Church

China launches major crackdown:
100 evangelical leaders arrested

Stefan J. Bos

BEIJING, China (ANS) — Two human rights watchdogs appealed to China, June 15, to release over 100 evangelical church leaders who they say were arrested after the Communist government issued a "secret directive" to launch a massive crackdown against religious groups and promote Atheism.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide said it had joined China Aid Association (CAA) in urging the Chinese authorities to release the leaders of China Gospel Fellowship, arrested June 11 at Wuhan City, Hubei province, where they retreated together.

In a statement to ASSIST, CAA quoted an unidentified senior house church leader and an eyewitness as saying that about 50 police, believed to be from the feared Public Security Bureau (PSB) of Wuhan City, raided the church meeting and arrested all of the participants.

They included the 39-year-old senior Gospel Fellowship leader Mr. Xing Jinfu, CAA said. The organization added that Xing was arrested at least three times in the past for his Christian activities and sentenced to three years re-education through labor in 1996 on charges of "illegal preaching."

CAA said it had also learned that in a separate incident China Gospel Fellowship Pastor Shen Xianfeng was put under house arrest in Wuhan city after PSB officers "thoroughly searched a house where Mr. Shen was recovering from illness of his crippled legs."

Whereabouts unknown

The whereabouts of the other arrested church officials are still unknown, CAA said. China Gospel Fellowship, which was established in the mid-1980s, is one of five major Chinese house church groups with a combined membership of at least five million members.

CAA said it has learned from an internal source within Chinese Communist Party that the Politburo had recently convened in a special secret meeting discussing "how to deal with religious affairs in China."

It quoted the source as saying "a secret directive was issued after the meeting calling every level of the Chinese government and the Party to crack down" against "illegal religious activities." The directive also urged the Communist Party's Department of Propaganda to carry out a special media campaign promoting atheism, CAA said.

A Russian Orthodox church in Harbin that is still a museum.

Massive arrests

"Given the recent massive arrests of unregistered religious leaders in different areas in China," added Bob Fu, president of CAA, "the international community should be alarmed and take concrete actions to urge the Chinese government to fulfill her signed pledge to protect her citizens' religious freedom mandated by relevant international human rights covenants."

The latest reported crackdown comes just days after another Christian human rights group, The Voice Of the Martyrs (VOM) said Chinese house church leader Xu Shuangfu's whereabouts and condition are unknown, and that Chinese Christians fear for his life, as another believer was already tortured to death.

Xu, leader of the 500-thousand strong house church group "Three Grades Servants" in Henan Province, northeast China, was arrested April 26, and since then family members have been prevented from seeing him, reported VOM. He could face the death penalty if convicted of leading an "Evil Cult".

Beaten to death

He was detained by the PSB in Harbin City, Heilongjiang province, along with other believers including Gu Xianggao, a teacher of the group. Gu, 28, was beaten to death the next day while in the custody of PSB officers, his family and human rights watchdogs say.

CAA and Christian Solidarity Worldwide have urged Christians to press the Chinese authorities to release these arrested church leaders immediately. Both Christian Solidarity and the Voice of the Martyrs urge Christians to write on behalf of the detained Christian leaders.

President Hu Jintao

The Chinese President Hu Jintao, who visited Budapest last week, has refused to answer questions from reporters about human rights issues. But analysts have linked the latest crackdown to concern among Communist authorities about the rapidly growing churches in China. Besides individuals known to human rights groups, thousands of Christians and dissidents are believed to be detained across China in prisons and labor camps.

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Stefan J. Bos is Special Correspondent, ASSIST News Service. He was born and raised in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, not far from the typewriter of his father, who still is a reporter and ghostwriter. Bos is now writing from Hungary, the country to which his parents smuggled Bibles during Communism.

War *...continued from p 8*

poverty while intensifying the existing one drastically," they observed.

Churches anticipate 40 million HIV/AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, while citizens are expected to lose an average of 17 years of their lives to the disease in the early part of the 21st century. To remain focused on their war, churches will mark the last Sunday of November each year, through fasting and prayer for the rapid end of AIDS-related stigma, discrimination, denial and inaction.

Further laws disestablishing Lutheran church in Finland brings loss of members

HELSINKI, Finland (LWI)– Recently enacted laws in Finland have contributed to decreased membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) according to ELCF Archbishop Jukka Paarma. And a new law on religious freedom and the law concerning funerals have also led to significant debate in Finland on the meaning of church membership for individual Christians.

The law on religious freedom came into force in August 2003 while that on funerals was effected early this year. Previously, religious education in public schools emphasized the concept of "confessional religious education." With the new law, the teaching of religion continues, but allows all pupils to have access to such instruction in their respective faith tradition. Freedom of religion is understood as an individual's right to confess and practice faith, and belong to a religious denomination. The role of the state is to ensure freedom of religion and create the right conditions for it, the archbishop explained.

Paarma said the new laws have affected membership in the ELCF, currently with over 4.6 million members representing around 84 percent of the Finnish population. While there were notable declines in membership during significant periods of social, political and economic changes in the country in the past, the current decrease, although not higher than during the 1990s recession, was remarkable.

Leaving church made easier

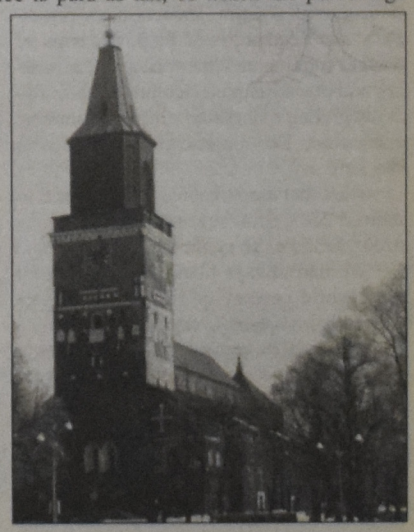
There have been previous losses of membership. The first was after the 1923 introduction of the law of religious freedom, when members of religious minorities left the Lutheran church. The number of those leaving the church increased again after the Second World War, when antagonism to the church was fierce, especially in the labor movement. A sharp rise in resignations in 1984 followed General Synod's decision not to accept the ordination of women, which was overturned two years later.

The new law of religion makes it easy for people to leave the church, the ELCF archbishop explained. The month notice period is no longer a requirement for individuals wishing to discontinue membership in a religious denomination. Neither does the resignation letter need to be delivered personally.

Concern over new regulations on burial grounds

Another reason for leaving the Lutheran church are new regulations governing burial grounds, said Paarma. Under the law effective January 2004, Lutheran cemeteries now serve as public burial grounds, and even those who are not church members have the right to be buried there. Accordingly, grave fees are no longer cheaper for ELCF members, and funeral fees are the same for all Finns. "Many church members are disappointed that they've paid church tax all their life, and now those who have never paid anything get a grave site and funeral at the same price." But he pointed out that the state subsidizes for such services, "so we cannot say it is not right, but there is a feeling of betrayal on the part of congregation members."

Church membership fee is paid as tax, of which the percentage varies from parish to parish at between 1 to 2.23 percent. Referring to local surveys, this year' ELCF report states that 80-90 percent of Finns are of the opinion that the opportunity to have their children baptized, get married in church and have a church funeral are important reasons to belong to the church.



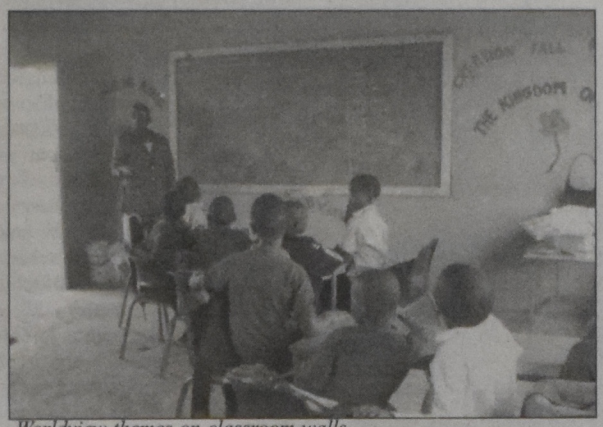
Turku Cathedral is the biggest Gothic cathedral in Finland. It was first built in 1286 - 92, but was largely destroyed by the Russians in 1318 then later rebuilt and enlarged.

Mission

Building up Christian education in Africa

Sonya Vanderveen-Feddema

In twelve classrooms of Theocentric Christian College in northern South Africa, freshly painted letters above the blackboards declare "Our World Belongs To God." To each side of the inscriptions, other phrases – God's Sovereignty, Creation-Fall-Redemption, Made in God's Image, and The Kingdom of God – spell out the historical components and meaning of this bold declaration.



Worldview themes on classroom walls

In February 2004, Marc and Dora Stroobosscher, members of Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, were instrumental in teaching students, staff, and administrators of Theocentric, an elementary and secondary school, how that declaration defines the Reformed vision for Christian education. Both educators, themselves with many years of experience in southern Ontario's Christian school system, Marc, 64, and Dora, 60, contributed their expertise to the fledgling, struggling school.

The seed for the retired couple's venture was planted in 1989 when Dora traveled in Haiti for two weeks and realized the need for teacher support and training in third world countries. Though many years passed, the desire to follow up on that initial experience lingered. Dora recalls that in the late 1990s during an Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) summer curriculum writing session Canadian teachers were joined by South African educators, who shared their Christian schools' needs.

Later, Jim Vreugdenhil, Director of Elementary Education for the OACS, spoke at Covenant Christian School in Smithville where Dora taught. He told students about his visit to three Christian schools in South Africa, including Theocentric. Covenant decided to "twin" with Theocentric, and occasional contact was established. In 2002, Diana Brunsveld, a teacher from Covenant, traveled to the school with supplies donated by Covenant's students. Brunsveld returned with a request from Theocentric's principal: "We need a lot of help, in terms of teacher training and mentoring and in writing and developing curriculum – especially in integrating a Christian worldview into the curriculum. Do you know of anyone who can help us?"

Aware that the Stroobosschers planned to retire in 2003, Brunsveld said to Dora, "They need you there. You have to go!"

"We had always planned to work in a third world country or in any area where we could serve God in our retirement years," Dora says. "The request from Theocentric gave a specific focus to that desire. We both immediately felt that this was where God was calling us to go."

Upon initial contact, the couple learned that Theocentric's School Council (Board) also needed assistance in developing governance, staffing, and other school policies. Marc's experience as an administrator would address that need.

The couple contacted World Wide Christian Schools (WWCS), an organization that raises funds to promote Christian education in third world countries and supports teams that go to the Dominican Republic and Central America to build schools. They asked about the possibility of funding themselves through WWCS so that they could benefit from a charitable donation tax refund. WWCS agreed to support them through prayer and a financial gift.

Upon arrival in Johannesburg, the Stroobosschers traveled nine hours to Louis Trichardt, a town in the province of Limpopo. Mr. Herman Pienaar, the principal of Theocentric and a fourth generation Afrikaner, had arranged for them to rent a primitive, steel fisherman's cottage on a lake created by the building of the Albasini Dam, a 45 minute drive to the school.

According to Marc, after 1994 public education became available to all children in South Africa, where the government provides a grant of 1,500R ($300 CAN) per student per year. Because of the influx of students into the educational system at that time, facilities and teachers have been stretched beyond their limits. Some public school classes have up to 75 students. A bold document, Curriculum 2005, published by the Education Minister, envisions eventually offering an education, not only to children, but also to the older generation who were denied schooling.

"Because public education is in a time of turmoil and transition, many private schools are being established," Marc says. "Starting a school seems to be fairly simple – you have to own the land and building in order to continue receiving the grant per student. The parents then add tuition to the grant money in order to hire qualified teachers and to control class size. This still creates a system in which children of wealthier parents have better opportunities."

Theocentric Christian College was established in 1999 by the Black Reformed Church of Tiyani, in a Shangan village in Limpopo. Led by Dr. Mashauw, a group of Christian parents from the Shangan and Venda tribes – tribes which were past rivals – wanted their children to be taught from a Reformed perspective, to have Christian education that consisted of more than classroom devotions and school chapels. They wanted their children to be challenged to become instrumental in bringing change to their culture and country.

"They made a courageous, trusting, and almost unheard of decision," Dora explains. "They both decided to sell tribal land to Theocentric Christian College. In South Africa, tribal lands are owned by the tribe. All tribe members are given a piece of land on which to build a house and grow a garden, but nobody *owns* the land. In a country where tribal loyalties are strong, we celebrated with them this decision to put that all aside for the cause of Christian education. It gave credibility to the name chosen for the school, Theocentric – put God in the center."

The group bought an abandoned bakery and converted part of it into a school for Kindergarten through Grade 8. On the first day, one student and 4 teachers were present. By year's end, 78 students were enrolled. Because the school was too far away for most children whose parents wanted to send them, the group rented property closer to the villages. There was one problem – because the property was rented, Theocentric didn't qualify for government assistance. Still, enrollment increased rapidly and the need for a larger facility became obvious.

Dora and Marc at the harbor

The Theocentric Association for Christian Education (TACE) now consists of two campuses, six kilometers apart, with a total enrolment of 482 students and more hoping to join. Small classrooms and crowded conditions mean some teachers conduct lessons from doorways. Theocentric 1 which is rented has electricity and inside toilets for the teachers. The students use outside pit toilets. Theocentric 2 is built on 80 acres of donated tribal land. Six pit toilets meet the needs of 15 teachers and 325 students. There is no electricity. One water tank provides fresh water, if it is filled on time. Without a staff room, teachers have no place to store their personal belongings or books. If the weather cooperates, they work outside. If it rains, they go to the back of the uncrowded Grade 12 classroom.

The day before Marc and Dora arrived at Theocentric 2, an English teacher took a position at another school without notifying the administration — not an unusual occurrence. Since public schools pay three times as much as TACE, teacher turnover is common. Supply teachers are not provided. Current teachers supervise classrooms, but do not teach.

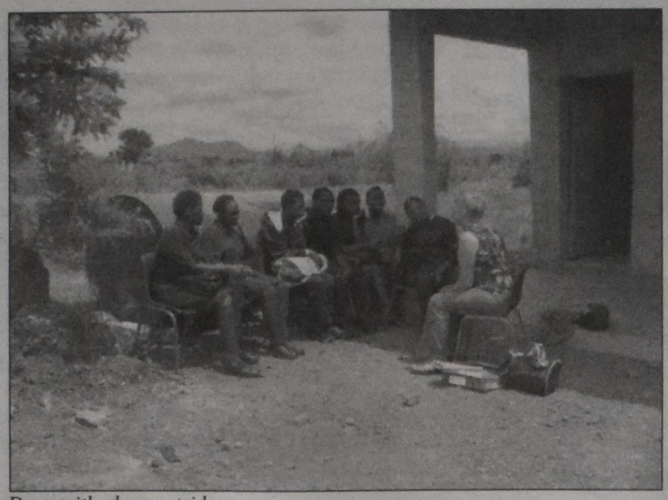
"This kind of turnover really hurts the students," Dora comments. "We discovered, though, that they are quite resourceful. If there is no teacher, they do homework which benefits those who have no text books and have difficulty completing anything at home. They also sing a lot, an activity that they enjoy. There are, of course, always students who take advantage of unsupervised situations, but generally we found that students fared on their own much better than students in our schools would."

When the students asked Marc and Dora to be their English teachers until a new teacher was hired, they agreed to do so for the next few days. After a new teacher arrived, he asked Dora to continue teaching so that he could learn from her teaching style. Meanwhile, Marc interacted with the principal, discussing school policies which needed to be changed and learning about problems the school encountered. Both Marc and Dora observed teachers and discussed their lessons with them, encouraging, advising, and mentoring them.

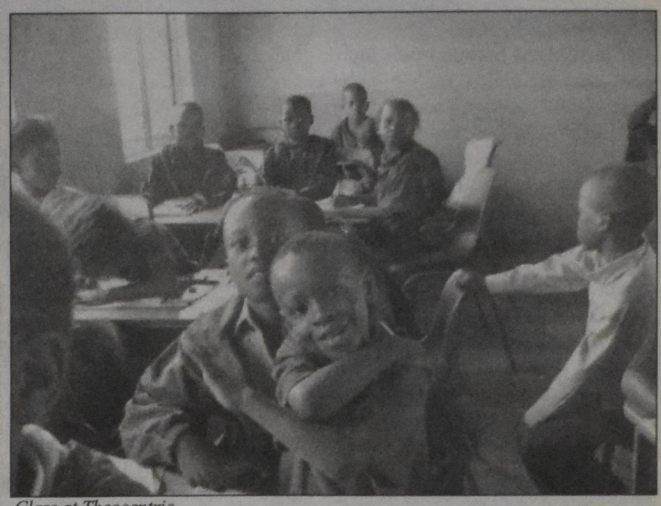
Dora also conducted after-school workshops on integrating a Christian worldview into the curriculum. "Integrating worldview effectively is a struggle for all Christian school teachers," she says. The

Mission

year before Dora retired, a team of teachers from Smithville and Fruitland Christian Schools approached this struggle in a new way. She explains, "We developed an instruction binder to teach our students the 'language' of Reformed thought – those marvelous and far-reaching concepts of Worldview, God's Sovereignty, Made in his Image, Creation-Fall-Redemption, Redemptive History, and The Kingdom of God. That 'language' became familiar to them, so that the concepts could be integrated into any subject area. Little did I know then that this binder would be the blueprint for my workshops in South Africa!"



Dora with class outside



Class at Theocentric

After each workshop the teachers received a large paper label with that day's concept printed on it. They taught this word to their class the next day. Though the teachers were familiar with the concepts, they had never had anyone help them incorporate them into the curriculum. "That is where Marc and I made a difference," Dora says. "We were around to answer their questions and to celebrate their successes."

Dora and Marc promised the teachers that the workshops' words would be painted on their classrooms' walls. The Stroobosschers bought paint and three students brought the project to fruition. By the time the couple returned to Canada each of the 12 classrooms of Theocentric 2 had OUR WORLD BELONGS TO GOD painted above each blackboard and the other words to each side. One excited teacher said, "Now we can never forget that we have to work hard to put these ideas into our teaching."

While at Theocentric, Marc led three workshops with the TACE's Council and explored with them their vision for the school. The Council hopes to add 12 more classrooms to Theocentric 2, so that the entire student body can study on one campus and so that no child will be turned away. They also envision erecting several other buildings: a center to educate teachers who received their basic training in the public system, but who need to become familiar with the Reformed worldview; a guest house for visiting teachers; a covered area which would serve as a 'student lounge' and a place to have weekly assemblies out of the sun; and an orphanage for the numerous children whose parents have died of AIDS. Also, they envision establishing a community garden and kitchen, which would provide nutritious food for students and offer employment for adults.

On the last day of the Stroobosschers' stay, 482 students and 100 parents gathered under a large tree to say good-bye with speeches, singing, dancing, laughter and tears. Dora says, "The senior grades had composed a farewell song, and under the direction of one of the newly hired teachers a choir of 150 voices sang as only Africans can sing. Nelson Mandela wrote, 'The curious beauty of African music is that it uplifts even as it is tells a sad tale.' We held hands with each other and listened to the words as tears rolled down our faces."

When Marc and Dora went to South Africa they set out with an open mind to talk and to listen to people, all the while acknowledging that they had much to learn about South Africa's past, and that their interaction with black people would be different because the apartheid era is not part of their personal experience.

"Our main interaction was with rural people in the northern part of South Africa," Marc says, "and therefore our experience will be quite different from someone who has been in the urban centers of Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Durban. The black people we talked to are very optimistic about the future of their country." Marc points out that most villages now have hydro and running water. All children have the opportunity for an education through Grade 12. Each child up to the age of six now receives Child Allowance. A minimum wage has been established. The government is beginning to deal with the problem of AIDS. The villagers are by and large quite poor. The unemployment rate runs between 30 and 40 percent. With such a high unemployment rate, crime flourishes.

"In spite of all that, we did not meet one black person who was not hopeful," Dora says. "The more educated among them recognize the excesses and inexperience of their leaders, but as one of them said, 'When black people have had nothing and then they are given so much, it would be unreal to expect that some will not take advantage of the situation. We are willing to forgive them, and know that it will take a few generations before all that we hope for will actually happen.'"

Dora relates how a teacher at Theocentric who was presenting a time line of South Africa's history did so without taking the opportunity to create black nationalistic sentiments among the students. Instead, she looked at what was happening now and spoke in thankfulness, not anger.

Marc and Dora discovered that the older white population in the northern province is much less optimistic about South Africa's future. They listened to reactions like the following comments without making judgements:

* "I used to have a farm large enough to employ 160 black workers. When a minimum wage was legislated, I could not afford that much help, sold the farm for reforestation projects, bought this smaller farm and now employ only 35 people. Legislation like that just increases the level of unemployment. People who were at least making something are now making nothing. This government is driving the country into economic chaos."

* "The kind of civil wars that rocked other African countries that gained independence will also take place here yet. "

* "Affirmative Action (meaning that employers must show an employee ratio that reflects the country's population, 20% white and 80% black) just isn't going to work. Blacks are not trained for many of the jobs for which they are hired. Large and small businesses are simply moving out of the country."

In southern South Africa the Stroobosschers talked to white people who were much more optimistic about the future than their rural counterparts. "Someone explained to us that often the urban areas are quicker to adopt and adapt to changes than are the more remote rural areas," Marc explains. "We spoke with a professional couple from Johannesburg who were embarrassed to admit that they had grown up during the years of apartheid, quite ignorant of the plight and treatment of blacks and colored people. They have had to reevaluate the many conceptions that they grew up with in regards to black inferiority. One said, 'I can hardly believe that I used to think that associating with blacks was unacceptable; whereas now my own grandchildren have black playmates. We ourselves were brainwashed in the schools and churches, but we were taught that only Communist countries brainwashed their citizens.'"

The Stroobosschers have met with the board of WCS-Canada and will continue to work with that organization. WCS has been mainly involved with the building of schools, but is investigating the next phase – that of training teachers who work in these schools to teach all subjects from a Christian perspective. The Stroobosschers' want to continue this work at Theocentric during a two-month return visit in 2005. Using a two-part presentation about their trip, 'Faces and Places of South Africa' and 'Presenting Theo-centric Christian School', they hope to raise funds and create awareness about the needs of Theocentric. As Dora said, " The passion for Christian education in South Africa reminds me of people like my father and so many others who pioneered Christian education in Ontario."

Any school or group who would be interested in seeing the presentation and hearing the Stroobosschers tell of their experience are invited to contact Rev. John Posthuma, Director of WCS Ministry Development Telephone/Fax: 905-765-5623 e-mail: ao090@hwcn.org

First Person

Class trip

Ron DeBoer

I'm wedged between two fourth grade butts on a big yellow school bus careening down the 401 toward Toronto. Three toothless, freckled faces have popped up over the forest green seat in front of me, grinning happily as I rub the back of my head where a penny from the back of the bus has pinged off my skull. The kids a couple of rows back have been screeching out my "favourite" class trip song-"THIS IS THE SONG THAT NEVER ENDS...." even though Bernie-the-bus-driver has been scowling at them in his big wide mirror since we pulled out of the school parking lot.

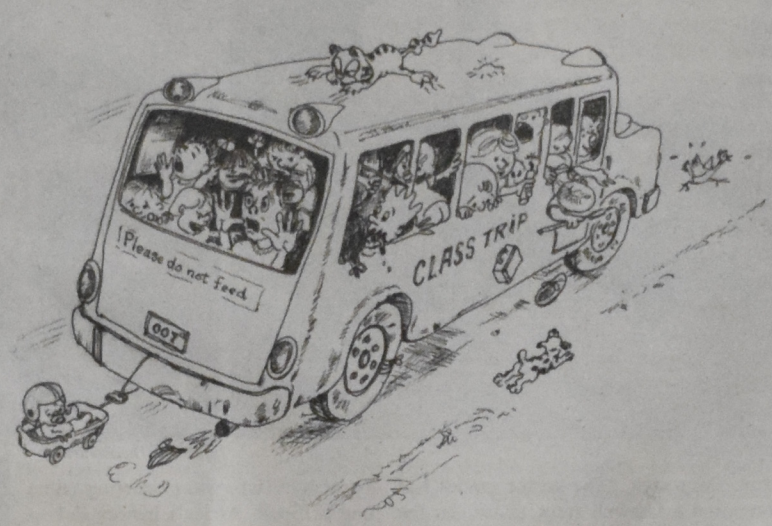
All the other parent-volunteers wear the same waxen smile as I. We are all staring disbelievingly at that one kid from our own seemingly normal household who has transformed into something zoo-like. My once sweet little pony-tailed daughter has now sprouted ape hair and long limbs, and is hopping up and down scratching the top of her head and armpit – all the while smiling at me with eyes that say, "Isn't this better than Christmas morning, summer holidays and your honeymoon all rolled into one?"

It's the annual fourth grade class trip to Toronto. I started the silly trend of taking a personal day and accompanying my daughters on their fourth grade trip five years ago with my oldest daughter. Wouldn't it be neat to take a day off teaching wild high school students so I can spend the day with wild mini-high school students? Five years ago was the Science Center. Three years ago – when Kid Number Two hit grade four – it was the Royal Ontario Museum. This year is a visit to Medieval Times, where jousting, horseback riding and the Queen's honour are at stake. A sword is exactly what I need sitting on the bus with these rosy-cheeked little maidens and knights!

Our Queen – the fourth grade teacher – announced she would "volunteer" to drive her car behind the bus, "in case a student needed to be driven home in a hurry." We can see her out the back window. She's tapping the steering wheel to her favourite CD while sipping a Tim Horton's coffee. Meanwhile, the pulse in my head is keeping beat to another of my "favorite" songs – "HEY BUS DRIVER SPEED UP A LITTLE BIT...."

I join in when my daughter elbows me. I have strict instructions to make a cool impression on her classmates.

On my first fourth grade class trip to the Science Centre five years ago, I was assigned to a group of girls...plus Curtis. Curtis wanted to be a scientist and walked through each exhibit spitting, "That is sooooo fake," after which he'd launch into a diatribe about how his father and he had built a chemical laboratory out of toilet paper rolls and chicken wire. In his short scientific career, he informed me, he'd dismantled a Volkswagen, invented his own



tree, and was working on an invisibility cloak.

While my daughter and her two friends stuck their hands on big silver globes to make their hair go on end, Curtis glued himself to my leg and related every detail of the voltage needed to create the electrical charge to raise hair. He then segued seamlessly into a monologue of the muscle actions needed for a person to sneeze.

When we sat down for a peaceful lunch, Curtis plunked himself beside me and said, "You'd never eat that sandwich if you knew what went into bologna." While I chewed, Curtis explained the process from the farm to the butcher to the meat store.

While expecting to watch Kid Number One on her first real class trip, I found myself being lectured to by Curtis – an only child who was nine going on 31 – on the basic ingredients for building a monster. When we got off the bus back at the school, Curtis followed me to my van and asked me if I wanted to visit his lab.

Maybe another time, I said.

Despite our close relationship that day, you might be surprised to know that Curtis and I lost touch over the years. But I caught up with him a few weeks ago while flipping through the newspaper. There was Curtis, standing in a group with four other grade nine students who will be heading to the national science fair competition in a few weeks!

I probably should have taken Curtis up on his offer to buy into his laboratory start-up business; one day he'll probably be my neurosurgeon or, if he's less successful in life, the prime minister.

Three years ago – on my second fourth grade class trip – I found myself surrounded by dozens of four-footers in the lobby of the Royal Ontario Museum. This time, I was assigned to an all-girl group who spent more time in the gift store loading up on gum than they did looking at early Victorian furniture. They were more interested in riding the elevator from floor to floor than learning about the marvels of how the dinosaurs became extinct. And while I was studying the evolution of guns since the 1800s, they were sitting along the wall of the archeological exhibit making bracelets out of gum wrappers, all the while blowing bubbles the size of grapefruits.

No Curtis-types in this group!

When we got home, Kid Number Two couldn't stop talking about how great the trip to the ROM was. The stories she retold were about Melissa and Gabby and Travis, the boy who teases her good-naturedly. She talked of the bus ride and the cool sunglasses she bought at the gift shop.

I realized that class trips are more than cramming kids with information about the Vikings. They're about laughing at the back of the bus driver's head, seeing your teacher in blue jeans and pressing your face against the window and cheering when the CN Tower looms on the horizon as the bus rumbles down the Gardner Expressway.

Having gleaned all this wisdom from my two previous trips, I was feeling pretty confident getting ready to go to Medieval Times with Kid Number Three.

I lost that confidence while pouring milk on my Shreddies the morning of the trip when my daughter pranced into the kitchen with her sunglasses on her head, her sweater draped over her shoulders sophisticatedly with the sleeves tied neatly in a knot on her chest and her lip gloss sparkling in the early morning sunlight.

"You're not wearing that shirt today," she said.

"What's wrong with my shirt?" I muttered through a mouthful of Shreddies.

"It's got a collar," she said, looking at me as if I'd decided to wear an armoured vest. "Wear that cool red one with the stripes. And wear those jeans with the loop on the leg. And can you wear your Nikes, too? The boys love Nikes. And one more thing: when we're sitting on the bus, be funny. I told everyone you're really funny. Make stuff up. I told my class you have a really good imagination."

I'm surprised she didn't tell them I was Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny, too.

So here I sit in my red-striped shirt and Nikes, smiling frozenly, telling Kid Number Three's friends the bus is being hijacked and we're on our way to Montreal and will probably never return to Kitchener for years, so they'd better save some of their lunch. Kid Number Three gives me a look of approval.

The other parents are all Moms. The Mom across the aisle from me has been videotaping everything. Even Bernie-the-bus-driver had to say hi into the camera. "Say hi to Mary Elizabeth's Daddy," said Video Mom as we boarded the bus. Video Mom has a big illustrated book about the Medieval era opened on her lap. She is explaining armour and the art of jousting to her poor kid who sits obediently beside her on the seat while staring forlornly at the kids playing Truth or Dare in the seat in front of her.

I say to the kids, "Do you smell smoke?"

And all their eyes widen.

"I think this old bus is going to blow," I say. "Heads between your knees!"

Video Mom rolls her eyes at me and picks up the book so that her face is hidden. "Yes, it is very noisy on the bus, Mary Elizabeth." She adjusts the yellow plugs in her daughter's ears.

At the Medieval Times parking lot, we unfold ourselves from the seats and begin the walk to the jousting arena. Hundreds of kids from schools across the province squeeze through the gates with us. My group consists of three girls this year.

"Keep your eyes on the tall funny-looking guy and you won't get lost," I shout above the din.

We are seated in the arena where maidens and servants serve us chicken and baked potatoes and bread. We are given no utensils since we have time-machined into a Medieval World. We gnaw on chicken bones and slobber down our ale (which comes in a Pepsi cup!)

Below me, Video Mom's face has become a camera. She records everything while her kid sits beside her. When a court clown – an old guy with three teeth and squinty eyes – offers Video Mom's kid a drink from his flask, she screams in hysterics, and Video Mom covers the kid's eyes and disappears out the exit, bending over and yelling at her whimpering kid. When she returns, the kid is carrying a real cast iron sword, is wearing a plush

First Person

crown adorned with rubies, and is licking a lollypop.

My kid looks at me and rolls her eyes. Then the lights dim and the knights come galloping out into the arena on their white horses. Each section of the arena is given a crown, on which the colour of our knight can be found. We are "Yellow." Our Yellow Knight, a spindly fellow with long stringy hair and beard, comes cantering over to our section. The kids go wild, stomping there feet and drawing their drumsticks over their heads like swords.

A tournament is held between the knights. They are knocked off their horses with lances, mock-stabbed with daggers, and chased out of the arena by the Green Knight or the Black Knight.

I look down at Kid Number Three, and she is mesmerized by the story playing out in front of her. When it is announced that one of the knights has turned evil, her hands shoot to her mouth. "Not our Yellow Knight!" She shrieks. When the lights dim even more and mist begins filling the arena, she moves closer to me, her hand on my arm.

In the end, our knight saves the day; he comes galloping triumphantly into the arena and jousts the evil knight to his death. My daughter looks up at me and smiles. "This is sooo great," she says.

I breathe a sigh of relief. She has been looking forward to this day for months. Like a lot of kids, Kid Number Three doesn't always enjoy the event nearly as much as the period of time leading up to the event. Her imagination builds castles and her reality delivers shacks. She's nine years old, plays point guard on her basketball team with teeth clenched, writes long stories about her little sister, still sucks her thumb secretly in her bedroom, and is constantly the damsel-in-distress at the hands of her two older sisters, the Teen Queens.

Adolescence has not yet trotted toward her. Right now, I am her knight in shining armor. I am all-knowing, stronger than all other men, and can fix everything if I so choose. She still wants to grow up and marry me.

In three years my infallibility will pierce her like a lance. She will disagree with me out of principle, her friends – those little tykes singing at the tops of their lungs on the school bus – will enter her arena out of the mist…and she'll choose to be carried away by them.

But right now she is my little princess. When I put her to bed at night, she squeezes my hands and prays to God with a faith that could move mountains. She feels sorry for the poor, loves puppies and wishes she could stay home from school and play catch with her father all day.

On the bus ride back home, Kid Number Three slumps against my arm. The vibration of the bus lulls her to sleep, along with many of her classmates whose heads lean against the window as the big Toronto highways and skyscrapers melt away behind us.

I look at all the limp figures, most still wearing their cardboard crowns on which are scribbled autographs from the knights after the show. All around me are future farmers, salespeople, computer techies, perhaps even criminals. The thin black string of their lifeline is spent out before them as far as they can see. They will experience disappointment, rejection, triumph, and success as they grow up. Some will dedicate their lives to helping their fellow human beings; others will relentlessly pursue money at all costs. Some will have children so that fourth grade class trips can go on forever; others will choose other paths in their relationships.

But the future is a mere vapor on the landscape. Today, they dream of knights in shining armor saving the day. They wish for good to prevail over evil, and a land where honor, honesty and chivalry are basic expectations. If our world leaders could tap into the heads of these fourth graders at this precise moment and change the world based on their sensibilities, the globe would be a lot closer to Eden before the Fall than it is at present.

When we arrive back at the school, the kids gallop off the bus to their waiting parents. They will talk non-stop about their trip right through supper. But Kid Number Three and I walk home holding hands silently, having shared an experience – now a memory – to which no one else will ever have access. We need only look at one another every few minutes and smile, and the home movie of our day plays out in our minds.

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

Hockey, baseball, the birds and the bees

I just got done having "The Talk" with my grade seven class. Actually, it was a series of talks over several days: a time in mid-June when we discuss matters related to family life, sexuality, male/female anatomy, etc. I enjoy teaching about these things – partly because it's very interesting and partly because I have the class's undivided attention.

Sure there is a bit of muffled giggling when certain anatomical terms are used and there is a marked lack of student questions (for fear of embarrassment), but it's a time to talk about the birds and the bees in a frank, healthy, Christ-based context.

This afternoon, the principal and I took all the grade seven boys into the music room for a question and answer period. The discussion went well and, oddly enough, John and I both found that the conversation frequently drifted towards sports. For some reason, we both used sports analogies to highlight certain things we were trying to say. At one point, I told the guys that resisting certain kinds of temptation was similar to running through an obstacle course. John told the story of an old baseball injury to explain how one particular biological process worked. The guys seemed to respond well to this.

Then the subject turned to the students' experiences with talking about such issues with their parents. The guys were asked if and how their parents talked with them about family life and sexuality. Again, sports came up: "My dad took me fishing and told me about puberty." "Sometimes on the way to hockey practice, my parents talk to me about that stuff." "My dad told me about first base and second base all that."

It seems that sports provide a couple of important elements in how we communicate difficult subjects. First, they provide a sense of narrative. Every sports event is in essence a story. Two teams might battle one another and, through a series of events, one overcomes the other. An athlete running a marathon is battling the demons of physical and mental exhaustion to reach a goal. Most sports events are a story of a difficult task and worthy opponents to overcome.

When commentators look back on a game, they often talk about the turning points and the factors that set certain plays or points in motion. I recently watched a program that dissected the 1998 U.S. Open and the game stories of several tennis players who were in it. The two tennis experts who hosted the show talked in some detail about how certain key moments in particular games foreshadowed later events.

It's very possible that we enjoy sports because we enjoy stories. Beginnings and Endings. Successes and failures. This seems to make sports-talk ripe for analogy and for illustration.

Sports also seem to give many people (often guys) an opportunity to do something while they talk about difficult subjects. For myself, I find it difficult to converse about certain delicate topics while talking directly and making eye contact. I'm not one to sit in close quarters with someone and have an intimate discussion about sexuality or other unmentionables. It seems a lot easier to be hitting a racquetball or casting out a fishing line or even watching a hockey games during those times.

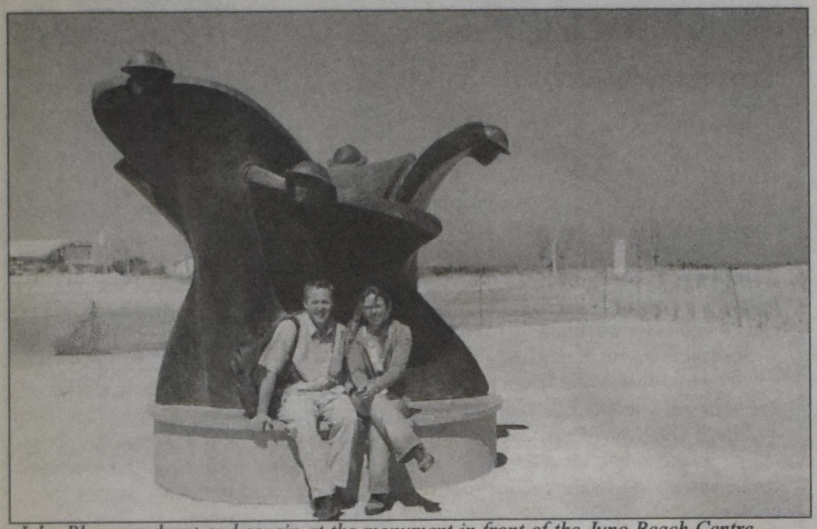
Insecurity? Emotional immaturity? You bet – guilty as charged. I doubt if I'm the only one, though.

Lots of people find sports a great escape. A diversion. It can also, however, be a means of facilitating important (and maybe difficult) dialogue. Like talking about the birds and the bees.

Tim Antonides has returned to BC after a year of graduate work to teach and coach at Surrey Christian School

Remembrance

A visit to the beaches of Normandy



John Blaauwendraat and cousin at the monument in front of the Juno Beach Centre

Number one on my life's "to do" list was to walk on the beaches of Normandy. I knew that 2004 was the 60th anniversary of D-Day, so when I began planning my trip to Europe this spring, I knew that it would have to include a side trip to France.

When I arrived in Holland, I rented a car and headed south on a four-day road trip with my cousin Evelien, who is also a D-Day enthusiast. What we experienced there has put the conflict of 1944-45 into perspective, changed the way I view our Canadian veterans, and given me new respect and gratitude for the freedom I sometimes take for granted.

The eventual liberation of Europe during the second World War began in the early hours of June 6, 1944 with an invasion of the beaches in the Bay of the Seine, code named Operation Overlord. What makes the quiet seaside resort area of Normandy so significant is that they were far from the landing spot the Germans expected for the invasion. Even after the operation was well underway, Hitler and his generals were convinced that this wasn't the invasion that the allies would use as their attempt to liberate the continent.

Driving south to Normandy is like traveling backwards in time through the summer and autumn of 1944. The road is dotted with signs indicating points of historical interest and battle grounds, some that are even visible from the highway. Passing through northern France on our way to our destination, we saw markers of WW 1 and 2 battle grounds; names of towns and places that have become synonymous with victory and defeat: Ypres, Vimy Ridge, and Dieppe.

Our first stop was the city of Caen, and the Canadian war cemetery of Cintheaux, which contains the graves of almost 3000 Canadian soldiers. Near the entrance was a registry with the names of all who are buried there, along with a guest book with names of visitors from all parts of Canada who had walked there over the previous weeks. With perennial flowers in front of every grave and not a blade of grass out of place we were awed by how orderly the grounds were. We entered our names in the guest book, left a message and continued on.

A little further down the coast is Omaha Beach, where the real life story of *Saving Private Ryan* began. As I stood there, I was haunted by the images of the men who arrived in their landing craft 60 years earlier and were cut down before they could even fire their weapons, those who became entangled in the barbed wire further up the beach, and the hundreds of bodies that lay lifeless on the sand.

The American cemetery behind the sea wall at Omaha is a testament to the American way of glorifying their dead. From the central monument we looked out onto stones perfectly arranged, and again, the grounds are immaculate. We surveyed a sea of crosses, and we could see that almost all who were laid to rest there received a Christian burial.

Wedged between the British landing sites of Gold and Sword beach is Juno Beach, the place where our Canadian service men came ashore. In their memory, the Juno Beach Centre was constructed, and it is nothing short of spectacular. Only a year old, it was the achievement of veterans and Canadian citizens who realized that there was really no visible memorial of the Canadian service men that landed there. Located directly on the beach, the Centre not only offers recognition and gratitude to the men who landed there, but it also takes the visitor on an interactive tour of Canadian life before, during and after the war.

Nearby we visited the Canadian cemetery Beny sur Mer at Courseulles. As we walked among the graves, we took time to read the inscriptions, and noticed that some had been arranged by the date they died; hundreds on the 6th of June. Many of those men were still in their teens in 1944, and I was struck by some of the words offered by the families: "Loving husband and father".

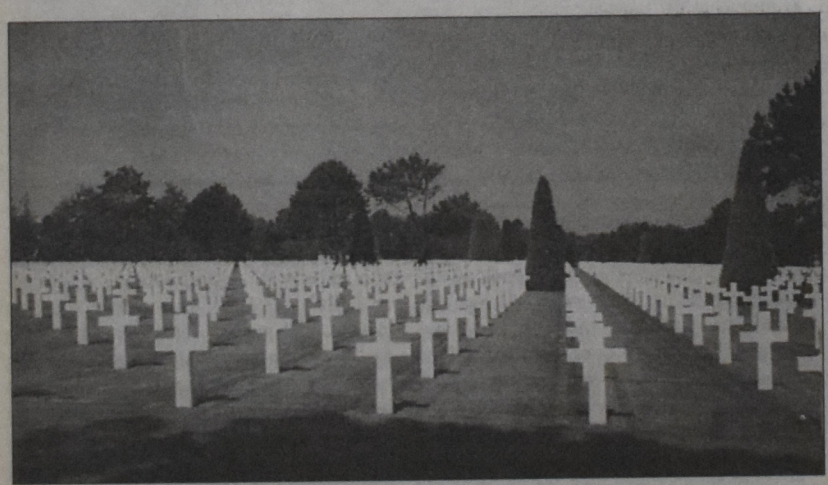
By far the most sobering place we visited was the top of the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc. The impressive appearance there bears witness to the intensity of the battle that took place there, and it's easy to imagine the hell that existed on that day. Located 30 meters above Utah Beach, the landscape is pock marked with craters 5 meters deep from the bombing raids that preceded the landing on June 6.

The cliff was a key objective. The allies suspected heavy guns had been positioned there to cover naval fire, so the mission of the American Second Ranger Battalion was to scale the cliffs to capture the German artillery positions which posed a threat to the ships out in the Bay. Standing on top of the cliff looking down, we realize that the mission was virtually suicidal as the Americans became easy targets for the fierce enemy machine gun fire. About half made it to the top, only to find that the artillery had been moved long before the invasion began.

The successful capture of the Normandy beachheads opened up the western front, and allowed the allies to push north to an eventual victory at the battle of Berlin. But I realized that what happened that day, and in the months that followed, was about more than just a successful military campaign. It was about deliverance from the tyranny of oppression, the faithful and guiding hand of Providence and about thousands of young men and women who laid down their lives and paid the ultimate price for freedom.

As we walked along the beach on our last day there I looked to the Channel and I remembered what I'd read; that the water turned red from the blood of those who fell there, and I realized that for many of those boys that beach became the threshold to glory. And I know that when I cross that threshold myself one day I'll see them gathered there, and remember the prophetic words that are inscribed on monuments throughout liberated Europe: "No greater love hath a man, than to lay down his life for his friends".

John Blaauwendraat is a member of the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church



Sea of crosses at Omaha Beach memorial

Canadian cemetery at Cintheaux

Castro's Cuba: still a slave fiefdom

Harry Antonides

One of their [tyrannical regimes'] goals is to make their opponents vanish. They want not only to imprison them, they want no one to have heard of them, no one to know who or where they are. So just to that extent, it's tremendously important that we pay attention. (Jeane Kirkpatrick, former U.S. ambassador to the UN)

Havana stands as a dreadful warning to the world – if one were any longer needed – against the dangers of monomaniacs who believe themselves to be in possession of a theory that explains everything, including the future. (Theodore Dalrymple, City Journal, Summer 2002)

Armando Valladares was a prisoner in Fidel Castro's gulag for more than twenty years. A one-time supporter of the Castro-led revolution, he soon fell out of favor when he objected to the totalitarian ideology and ruthless practices of the regime.

Arrested in 1960, he suffered endless deprivation, beatings, medical neglect, and systematic humiliation at the hands of sadistic guards. Periodically, he would hear Castro's firing squads execute "counter-revolutionaries" in the adjoining courtyard. His Christian faith sustained him while he endured such atrocities. He also found strength in his poetry writing, which somehow found its way to the free world. Pressure brought to bear on Castro by a number of human rights organization finally brought his release in 1982.

Abandoned prisoners

In 1984 Valladares published *Against All Hope: A memoir of life in Castro's Gulag*. He wrote that this book "is my witness; an attempt to inform the world about the true criminal nature of the ongoing dictatorship of Fidel Castro."

Time declared that *Against All Hope* "is an event of considerable cultural and political significance; the most detailed and irrefutable description yet published of the suffering engendered in Cuba by Communism and Fidel Castro."

This truly moving book has been compared to Koestler's classic *Darkness at Noon*, and other similar testimonies to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unspeakable cruelty – not to forget the writings of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Valladares writes that one of the hardest things to bear was the thought of being abandoned by the rest of the world. This feeling came to him every time his captors would show him a statement of support for Castro's revolution issued by some representative of American Christian churches. He said that reading such a statement "was worse for the Christian political prisoners than the beatings or the hunger."

How is the free world now doing with respect to the prisoners in the still existing gulags? Have we learned anything from the witness of this brave Cuban whose book should be read by every Christian in the free world?

The truth is that many have not learned a thing, but that the same sort of abandonment so painful to Valladares and his fellow prisoners is still happening today. This occurs every time Fidel Castro's regime is treated as just another regular government entitled to the respect due to all members of the civilized world.

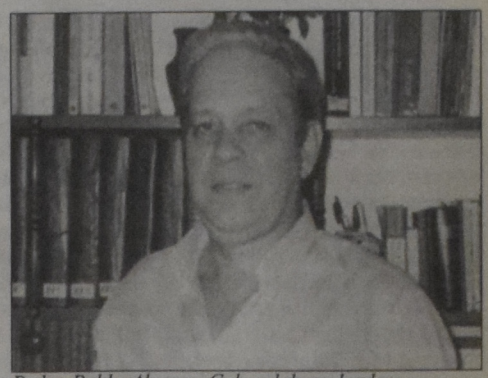
A Shameful Record

Canada has a deplorable record on this score. The worst offender is the Canadian government, especially during the Trudeau and Chretien eras. But others are not far behind in this roster of shame, including Canadian trade unionists, and many among the media, academic and literati.

Prime Minster Pierre Elliott Trudeau considered Castro a good friend and he was an honored guest at Trudeau's funeral. Prime Minister Chretien visited Castro in 1998 to confirm Canada's policy of "constructive engagement," intended to wean Cuba away from its errant ways. He officiated at the opening of the international Havana airport, built with Canadian materials and workmanship.

During this visit Chretien also spoke to Castro about the plight of four jailed Cuban human rights activists – Marta Roque, Vladimiro Roca, Felix Bonne, Rene Gomez – who had called for greater freedom in Cuba, a crime in that country. When Castro ignored Chretien's intervention and the four activists were sentenced to five years in Castro's gulag, he was reportedly "irked."

Canada's Cuba trade and investment policies were no more effective than Chretien's plea on behalf of Castro's prisoners. A number of Canadian investments, invariably routed through the Cuban government, have come to grief. The Cuban state has proven to be an unreliable business partner, particularly about paying bills. The Canadian taxpayer has footed that bill for unpaid debts to the tune of millions of dollars. Despite that sorry record, between 1994 and 2002, the Canadian International Development Agency sent nearly $65 million to Cuba.



Pedro Pablo Alvarez, Cuban labour leader

Human Rights Watch reported in 1999 that Cuba had failed to abide by the many treaties it had signed, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It noted the Canadian government had little to show for its constructive engagement policies.

But never mind all that, and the fact that no one can claim ignorance about the horrific reality of Cuba's police state. The Canadian government continues to legitimize the Castro regime. When the Cuban External Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez Ramirez visited the House of Commons in November 2002, he was hailed as "His Excellency" and was given a standing ovation, which John Turley-Ewart described, to the everlasting shame of the participating Mps, as "a testament to Canada's official response to the oppression of the Cuban people."

Delusions

The Vancouver-based Solidarity Notes, a labour/activist choir, accompanied by a representative of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, performed in Cuba in the spring of 2003. On their return they reported in glowing terms about the Cubans' perseverance despite daily discomforts and many shortages. They dutifully put the blame for these hardships on the Americans. Then they gushed: "We also learned, with some envy, of their advantages of free education and health care, low or no rent, national childcare, and total social security."

You read that right, "total social security." Every one of the items on that list is a lie because the entire Cuban revolution is based on a monumental falsehood. If these blinkered unionists had ventured outside of their Potemkin village guided tours and honestly investigated for themselves, they could have known the truth.

Cuba is a state where everyone is under constant surveillance. Those who dare to deviate from the compulsory worship of the "Revolution" and its great leader are deprived of jobs, education, and medical care. Their families are torn apart when the husband (sometimes the wife) is jailed far away from their homes, and treated as vermin. And this is called "total social security?"

These Canadian trade unionists, and they are not alone, are blind to reality because they refuse to see it even when confronted with the truth. They suffer from an addiction to the belief that socialism as practiced in Cuba must be right, no matter what. It's a case of delusion, and it is not a harmless one. For such delusion gives legitimacy to evil, and condemns its victims to a life of darkness and hopelessness.

Big Brother is Always Watching

Take the case of Cuban trade unionists (and others) who have been condemned by kangaroo courts to many years of imprisonment.

Last year a number of human rights activists started the Varela Project (named after a 19th-century Cuban priest who opposed slavery), demanding the kinds of freedom we take for granted. The Cuban constitution provides that such requests supported by more than 10,000 Cubans may be put a vote. Many more than the required minimum signed, which itself was an act of bravery, for the authorities now know who they are.

See **Cuba** *on p. 16...*

CLAC to Mr. Castro: "Let these people go free"

The Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) is planning two events to draw public attention to the plight of imprisoned labour leaders in Cuba.

On Saturday, July 24, the CLAC and the Cuban Canadian Foundation are planning a joint protest at the Cuban embassy in Ottawa. For more information call 1-888-279-2522.

On Monday, July 26, the date all Cuba commemorates the beginning of the overthrow of the Batista regime, the CLAC is planning to hand over more than 1000 protest cards to the Cuban ambassador.

The cards are an appeal on behalf of nine Cuban labour leaders who have been condemned to long prison terms for their "crime" of establishing an independent labour union (CUTC). The names of the imprisoned rights activists and the duration of their sentence are as follows:

Pedro Pablo Alvarez Ramos, secretary general of the Consejo Unitario de Trabajadores Cubanos (CUTC): 25 years in the Canaleta ("gutter") prison

Carmelo Díaz Fernández, director of the Consejo Unitario de Trabajadores Cubanos news agency: 20 years

Oscar Espinosa Chepe, journalist for CUTC: 16 years

Víctor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, CUTC delegate for the Pinar del Río province: 26 years

Alfredo Felipe Fuentes, CUTC delegate for the Havana province: 26 years

Adolfo Fernandez Saínz, freelance journalist and leader of the Christian Workers' Movement (Movimiento de Trabajadores Cristianos): 15 years

Horacio Julio Pina Borrego - Pinar del Rio, in a Havana Prison Luis Milan Fernandez - Santiago de Cuba Blas Girado Reyes Rodriguez - Sancti Spiritus

Cuba ...*continued from p.15*

The Cuban regime interpreted this project as an act of treason. It responded by circulating a counter petition requesting that Cubans make socialism an irrevocable part of the Cuban constitution. This government-orchestrated petition was signed by 99.37 per cent of the eligible voters.

To further intimidate the Varela petitioners and similar pro-democracy activists, the Cuban authorities sentenced 75 of their leaders to lengthy prison terms – up to 28 years. Among them are nine Cubans who have bravely risked the wrath of Castro's minions while speaking up for the freedom of the Cuban workers. They established an independent Council of Cuban Workers (CUTC) in 1995 and applied for legal recognition to the Cuban Minister of labour. The authorities have refused to recognize this union and have ignored all interventions by the International Labour Organization.

These leading trade unionists and their families have endured years of poverty, harassment and periodic detentions. They suffer discrimination in every area of Cuban life, including employment, education, and medical care. To work in a government-owned workplace (and everything belongs to the Cuban state), workers must provide proof that they are supporters of the Cuban revolution.

The catch is that such declarations can only be obtained from the Communist Party, the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, or the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. There is no escape from the prying eyes of the police and their informers in every neighborhood.

Let These People go Free

The Christian Labour Association of Canada and the Cuban Canadian Foundation are planning a joint protest at the Cuban embassy in Ottawa on Saturday, July 24. On Monday, July 26, the CLAC is planning to hand over its more than 1000 protest cards to the Cuban ambassador. For more details, see the accompanying sidebar: CLAC to Mr. Castro: "Let these people go free."

One of the imprisoned human rights activists is 63-year-old Oscar Espinosa Chepe, an economist and a journalist for the CUTC. He was sentenced last year to 20 years in prison for writing without the approval of the Cuban authorities and for speaking up for the Cuban workers' civil rights. He is in poor health, and his wife Miriam Leiva, an independent journalist, fears that he will not survive in prison.

How does the free press, that intrepid champion of victims in the world, respond to the urgent pleas of the inmates of the Castro's prisons? Oakland Ross, a feature writer, wrote on extensive article in the *Toronto Star* on June 12, 2004 about the 75 Cubans who were given lengthy prison terms.

He interviewed Miriam Leiva, but also representatives of the Cuban regimes to report their side of the story – as if they are morally equivalent. His article is representative of much that is passed off as unbiased reporting but in reality is propaganda of a vicious kind.

Ross presented the story of the 75 imprisoned rights activists as a counterweight to the experience of five Cubans who are now in U.S. jails for spying on behalf of the Cuban regime. He depicts both kinds of prisoners as victims of a silly, counterproductive spat between two foolish regimes. He does not describe Cuba as it really is; nor does he recognize that the U.S, is a haven for millions of refugees from wretched places such as Cuba. This is how Ross sees it:

"In many respects, despite the obvious disparity in numbers – five prisoners in one case, 75 in the other — the two groups of inmates are like mirror images of one another and strongly suggest that, for all their differences, the governments of the United States and of Cuba are in some ways remarkably similar."

So the victims of the inhuman Cuban regime are not only condemned by their oppressors. What in some sense is even worse, they are betrayed by the very people in the free world who, if they spoke the truth, could help to set these prisoners free.

In contrast, what the CLAC is trying to do is to speak the truth to power. It is right in raising its voice on behalf of the sorely oppressed Cuban workers and their families. Their plea for help is heartrending, and we may not pass by on the other side of the road.

**Against All Hope* was re-issued in 2001 by Encounter Books.

Harry Antonides
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Nesting

BuildingTrust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.

For the past three weeks we have had the privilege of witnessing the unfolding of a robin family. It all started when we first saw two very diligent robins flying back and forth building a nest. They carried bits of twigs, branches, hay and rope in their beaks and took them to a designated spot high up on a narrow ledge in the corner of the outdoor deck. Soon after the nest was built three little eggs appeared in it. Mother robin sat firmly on her nest for a week while father robin tirelessly flew back and forth bringing her everything she needed.

Then one day we heard a gentle tweeting from within the nest. The eggs had hatched and there were three scrawny little birds. Immediately the parents rose to the challenge of caring for their offspring. They flew back and forth carrying squirmy worms to drop into the squealing beaks reaching up from the nest. The babies grew quickly and within a week they peeked out from under mom's protective body looking for space and independence. Several days later all three babies had grown feathers. They started to flap their wings and one morning we saw three little birds sitting side by side next to the nest. The parents were hovering nearby making sure they were safe.

I have never seen the growth and development of a bird family so close by and it is a sight to behold. We talk about the birds every day. We speculate on what they are doing and why they might be doing it. As we talk about the birds, we connect their actions and behavior to our own understanding of family life. When mom sits on the eggs we say she is keeping them warm and safe. When both parents sit in a tree nearby we just know they are guarding the nest from a distance. When we want a close look at the babies but mom remains firmly planted on the nest, we understand she is protecting her brood from our prying eyes. We would do exactly the same. Everything we see matches our experiences in raising a family.

It has been four weeks since the day we first observed the birds building their nest. The babies are getting bigger now but can't fly yet. We wonder what will happen next. What will become of the birds? How will they learn to fly? What if a bird falls out and a cat gets to it? We imagine various possibilities. We worry because survival of the fittest is very real in the world of birds. Will they have the life skills to survive?

We have similar concerns when we observe our own children becoming independent and preparing to leave home. In this connection we actually use a number of expressions associated with the world of birds. We talk about children leaving the nest and spreading their wings. We say we have a nesting instinct when we await the birth of a baby. In winter we want to turn our home into a cozy nesting place. The idea of a bird's nest conjures up images of safety, warmth and comfort, everything we want for our family.

The bird parents are displaying many qualities we as human beings strive to develop. They show commitment and dedication in building their secure nest. They are loyal and caring towards each other. They take responsibility in meeting the needs of their little birds by feeding them, guarding them and keeping them warm. These birds are strong, purposeful and focused. They have inbred qualities that are developed without a whole lot of discussion (though I'm sure the language of birds is more complex than we imagine).

Observing that is making me think. How am I doing in terms of these qualities? Why is it so hard for me to get it right sometimes? God's handiwork in the behavior and the qualities of these birds is very humbling to me.

Now we are wondering what awaits these birds when they leave the nest. Most likely they will run into some very good experiences and also some difficult ones. Hopefully they will know what to do in the situations they find themselves in. The life of a bird seems quite hazardous. But then, maybe they will find a safe backyard with a great bird house with lots of bird seed in winter. Maybe they will fly to large open spaces in beautiful fields and mountains and perch on a tree top from where they can sing to their heart's content.

In this same way we wonder what awaits our kids when they leave our nest. Most likely their lives will unfold in wonderful and mysterious ways. We hope that by the grace of God they will be happy. We know they will experience pain. We hope we have taught them survival skills to navigate their journey. If not, we hope they will still learn them. Above all we hope they find meaning in their lives and a trust in God.

"I just can't believe how hard these birds work to take care of their babies," my daughter exclaimed in amazement one day as we looked out the window one more time (we are glued to it lately). "They endlessly fly back and forth dumping worms into those enormous beaks (relatively speaking, considering the size of the scrawny birds)." Then she looked down at her three blonde blue-eyed little boys. Smilingly she corrected her statement. "Yes, I can believe it. That's exactly what I'm doing for these guys. It just never stops."

I wholeheartedly validated that statement.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer – *The Great Martyr*

by J.H. Sillevis Smitt
Translated by Jack Van Meggelen

The Lord's Prayer occupies an unusual place in the lives of people. Even people who do not consciously think of religion and are very reluctant to call themselves Christians have a special place of reverence in their heart for the Lord's Prayer. People who know little of the Bible may yet fondly recall this prayer.

I remember that during the second world war, I visited a first mate of a naval ship who had been critically injured and was dying in a military hospital in England. I could only visit him once because I was scheduled to leave for another military hospital the same day. When I saw this man I knew the surgeon's prognosis, that this man would only live a few more hours, was not exaggerated. He was very near to death. I tried to speak to him about his faith but was met with a wave of the hand indicating that he did not want to discuss the subject. He had been in Sunday school as a child but had never cared much for God or religion.

I knew I should not tire him out too much, so when I learned that his mother tongue was French I asked him if he could teach me the Lord's Prayer in French. He said, "Gladly, Father" and began, "Notre Père, qui est aux cieux ...". After one more phrase he automatically folded his hands and closed his eyes. He did not recite it any longer, he was praying it, and I prayed silently with him. When he was finished I proposed that he had not just recited it, but that he had actually prayed it. He said he thought so too.

The wall around his heart was broken down, his resistance vanished, and the window to heaven stood wide open for him.

There are two ways to say the Lord's Prayer. We can memorize it by rote and recite it without thought, or we can pray it from the heart. This prayer is the greatest martyr in the history of the church. It has been terribly abused. It has been reeled off, berated, reviled, criticized, and rejected. But regardless of all the abuse of this prayer the Lord Jesus proclaims that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. The Lord's Prayer was not given us to recite absentmindedly, but to pray from the heart. If we want to pray this prayer, we must do so wholeheartedly. We must put our soul into it and completely submit ourselves to it.

You may think that you know the Lord's Prayer. I did too, for many years, until I stumbled on a passage from Luther. He once said something like this:

"It often happens when I pray the Lord's Prayer or a church prayer that one of the lines grips me particularly and I experience such a rich train of thought that I forego all other prayers. When such rich reflections come naturally during prayer it is best to stop and listen, and make room for these reflections. Listen quietly and do not interrupt. These are sermons of the Holy Spirit. And one word from his sermons is better than a thousand of our prayers. Thus I often learned more in prayer than I could have learned by reading or writing poetry.

"And, as I noted above in my comments on the Lord's Prayer, I wish to emphasize again that should the Holy Spirit come and begin to preach with rich, insightful, light-giving clarity, pay respectful attention. Let go of your own thoughts, which are only personal reflections and meditations. Be still and listen to him who knows much more than you.

"Note what he says and write it down. You will experience miracles."

These words of Luther remind me of a peaceful summer afternoon I once spent alone at a friend's cottage. I had planned to prepare my sermon for the following Sunday, and while I was praying to focus my attention on the sermon, the Lord's Prayer presented itself to me in an irresistible way. I spent two or three hours concentrating on each word and phrase of this prayer. After every word I paused and reflected on it. God's Spirit led my thoughts and every word blossomed like a flower. Every word fell like a seed on fertile soil in my heart. Whatever came up as I meditated on the text, I wrote down.

When finished it seemed as if I had never before prayed this prayer. So my advice is that if you wish to learn to pray the Lord's Prayer, take your time. Take lots of time. Go into your 'inner room' and take an hour or two. Say each word slowly in God's presence and deliberately reflect on what God wants you to hear in this word. Let each word within its context guide you. Test each of these words against your own life, and you will learn to understand Luther's words; you too will experience miracles.

Two Questions

I vividly remember that day at the cottage. I felt deeply that I could never again utter one word of the Lord's Prayer until it had found a clear and complete echo in my own soul. I learned to ask two questions of myself for each petition of this prayer.

The first one was: Can I pray this?

The second: Do I want to pray this?

Throughout our lives there will continue to be a great distance between the words of Jesus and the way we live. We barely penetrate the depth and meaning of his words and will. That is why, even in our most practised and sincere praying of the Lord's Prayer, we will still not have mastered praying this perfect prayer. We need a whole lifetime to begin to learn to pray it in earnest.

That ought not to scare us off. You can make beautiful trips in the mountains without ever climbing to the top. Therefore, take your time for this prayer. Speak it slowly, one word at the time and do not continue until each previous word sinks into your heart. Do not go on until a new vision or insight enlightens you with complete harmony to the text.

Then repeat the two questions: Can I pray this, and do I want to? You will face unexpected and powerful resistance, unwillingness and impurity of thought in your own heart. That is why praying the Lord's Prayer cleanses the soul. It is a spa for your faith and a mud bath for your soul. You will rekindle your first love and renew your utter dependence with joy and trust.

People often complain that prayer doesn't do anything for them. It doesn't help them to become more spiritual.

In my first Bible story book there was a picture of Cain and Abel's offerings before God. The smoke of Cain's offering turned down and the smoke of Abel's offer rose up to God. God was unreachable for Cain and he experienced no communion with him. Many people feel that when they pray the smoke of their prayer does not go up. God is unreachable and they have no contact with him.

Such a disappointing experience leads them to stop praying altogether. Some of these same people find that Bible reading doesn't touch them either, so they also stop reading the Bible. Then they blame the Bible for being a dark and mysterious book. It is considered no better than prayer.

Of course, this is not true, and it's not useful to think that way. But something else is needed. When we don't find God in our 'inner room', but remain totally alone and in the dark or when God appears far away and distant, it could be that the problem is with us. Some self reflection may be needed here. When our prayer life remains dull and dismal, instead of lifting us up and enriching us, it is possible that we might need to look for the reason within ourselves.

Maybe I should state it more clearly. Actually, the reason is always within us. God's love never fails, and his desire to find us and bless us also never wanes. You know what happens when the windshield of your car fogs over. Your vision is completely lost. There's only one reason for this fogging: a difference in temperature between the window and the air inside. Turn on the defrost and the window clears up.

So also with us. When we fail to find God in our prayers, it is because our soul is clouded over. God is not far from us, we are far from him. Something has come between us and God. Not from his side, but from our side. That obstacle has to be removed.

But, you say, you may not know what it could be. We are often unaware of the obstacles that have come between us and God in prayer. But when we honestly reflect for only a few moments we will usually know exactly what it is that is askew in our lives and the cause of our separation from God.

If you want to gain clarity about the obstacle, just pray the Lord's Prayer. Pray it slowly and conscientiously. Pray each petition, testing it against your heart. Think about it and you will find the cause of your shallow prayers. You will discover the resistence of your heart which conflicts with the love and truth of God. God will not condone the inner contradiction in your life.

When you pray the Lord's Prayer you may discover that at a certain point you cannot go on. The next phrase will not pass over your lips because it does not have the consent of you heart. Perhaps you stop at 'Your will be done,' or 'as we forgive our debtors,' or 'lead us not into temptation.'

The Lord's Prayer is a never-failing tuning fork for our inner life, because every word of the Lord's Prayer is the double distilled, pure, holy, loving Word of God. It is the perfect litmus paper to indicate if we are indeed completely subject to the will and Spirit of Jesus, as given to us in the Lord's Prayer. It is like an X-ray which clearly records the trouble spot of our being. It identifies the invasive tumour which eats us up and destroys us from the inside out in contrast to God's perfect healing love for us.

Structure of the prayer.

The Lord's Prayer cannot be dissected only with our intellect. It has to be approached and understood spiritually.

But a spiritual understanding does not exclude our intellect. Rather it embraces it. Religion and science are not opposites but they are linked together. We are familiar with the well-known words of Jesus that we must love God with our whole heart and mind and soul. We are not split into sections or parts. We are whole persons.

When we reflect on the Lord's Prayer with our intellect, and test it with our spirit, we realize that it has a strong inner coherence. After the opening words, 'Our Father in heaven,' follow two sets of three petitions. Three petitions relate to God, the other three to us. Three times: your, your, your, then three times: us, us, us. Then the Lord's Prayer closes with the doxology: For yours is the kingdom and the power and glory, forever.

One word is noticeably absent. The word ' I' or 'me'. There is no room for the individual 'me' in this prayer. Or rather there is room for 'me' in this prayer only if 'me' and 'mine' are completely absorbed in the 'yours' and 'us'. This prayer is not for the isolated 'me' who wishes to remain egotistic. Praying this prayer requires that we only say 'your' and 'us'. All self-centeredness and egotism come to an end here and are buried for good.

In the Lord's Prayer the 'I' dies a well-deserved death of faith. Those who pray this prayer honestly pray themselves to death. Paul speaks often and fondly of the crucifying and dying of the old self. This

Continued on p.18...

Opinion

Yes ... but

Bert Hielema

Cheney, oil, war and natural gas

I discovered an illuminating speech by Vice-President Cheney given when he was still the head of Halliburton, hardware supplier to the oil industry and lately also the main contractor for the Pentagon in Iraq, where it now is embroiled in various cases of overcharging and corruption. But that's another matter. By the way, Cheney still draws substantial moneys from that corporation.

I have always maintained that oil was the chief purpose for the Iraqi invasion. Now I have evidence from a speech given by Dick Cheney, the prime mover behind the Iraq invasion, to the Institute of Petroleum in London in 1999. There he mentioned three things of note: 1) oil is disappearing fast; 2) oil remains fundamentally a government business and 3) Middle-East oil is a "prize" to be pursued.

Here are his very words: "Producing oil is obviously a self-depleting activity. Every year, you've got to find and develop reserves equal to your output – just to stand still, just to stay even. This is true for companies as well in the broader economic sense for the world. A new merged company like Exxon-Mobil will have to secure over a billion and a half barrels of new oil equivalent reserves every year just to replace existing production. It's like making a return of 100% interest on investment. It's like discovering another major field of some 500 million barrels every four months, or finding two Hibernia's [a major find off Canada] a year. For the world as a whole, oil companies are expected to keep finding and developing enough oil to offset our 71 million barrels a day of oil depletion, and also to meet new demand. By some estimates, there will be an average of 2% annual growth in global oil demand over the years ahead along with, conservatively, a 3% natural decline in production from existing reserves. That means by 2010, we will need in the order of an additional 50 million barrels a day. So, where is the oil going to come from? Governments and the national companies obviously control 90 percent of these assets. Oil remains fundamentally a government business. While many regions of the world offer great oil opportunities, the Middle East with two-thirds of the world's oil and the lowest cost, is still where the prize ultimately lies." So far the quote from Cheney.

Pushing for war

I may add that he was wrong in estimating future demand when he said that the need for 71 million barrels per day (bpd) in 1999 will grow by 2 percent. It is now approaching 82 million bpd – closer to 2.5% – and there is growing concern that production has peaked. Cheney, when he spoke 5 years ago, wondered how the oil industry – and the world – would be able to survive. He foresaw *peak oil*, that dreaded moment when demand would be greater than supply. He then had no inkling that within one year he would become vice president and in a position to do something about that "rich" prize, and to make it his government's business and insure that America would not suffer.

Fast Forward to 2004 and a book entitled *Plan of Attack* by the prominent journalist Bob Woodward, who offers some intriguing insights into Cheney's psyche and Bush's beliefs. He writes that Cheney was obsessed with getting rid of Saddam and crazy for war. We now know why: oil. While Woodward pictures Bush as a deeply religious man, who quite openly told him: "I prayed that our troops be safe, be protected by the Almighty, that there be minimal loss of life....I was praying for strength to do the Lord's will.... I'm surely not going to justify war based upon God...." Bush, nevertheless – according to Colin Powell – would not decide anything "until the President had met with Cheney alone." Which makes me wonder.

Here is how I read all this. Cheney is a crafty man, with oil, not blood, in his veins, a man who knows that America – and his company, with whom he maintains strong ties – will die a sudden death without oil. I sincerely believe that Cheney has manipulated the President by pushing him towards war, under the disguise of democracy and freedom – Bush's hobby horse – with the secret intent to obtain "The Prize," and so secure oil independence in a world desperate for the stuff. As he noted in his speech 5 years ago: "It's the Middle East with two-thirds of the world's oil and the lowest cost, where the *prize* ultimately lies."

That's why Woodward writes that "Powell thought that Cheney took intelligence and converted uncertainty and ambiguity into fact.... When Powell approached the United Nations, Cheney was 'terrified' because once the diplomatic road was opened up, it might work."

Cheney wanted the oil. In his position as Vice President of the United States, and, for all practical purposes its President, he was able to implement his own words, that "oil remains fundamentally a government business."

To me it is no surprise that this entire venture has become a fiasco. Any undertaking based on lies is bound to fail sooner or later.

Natural gas no longer cheap

Not only is oil in trouble. So is natural gas. Checked your natural gas rate lately? I have propane and wood for heating – mostly wood – partly because the price of propane has gone into the stratosphere. When first I switched from oil to a cleaner propane, I was charged 40 cents per litre. Now it is 90 cents. And I am sure it's going up even more.

Normally natural gas and propane prices decline in the summer, as the heat gives furnaces a rest, but this year they keep on creeping up. "Conventional wisdom," the large investment houses, forecast oil to be $20.00 per barrel for 2005 and $3.50 per 1000 cubic feet (Mcf) for natural gas. Don't believe it. The last time I looked it was $6.51 and the futures price for next January is now over $7.00. I wouldn't be surprised to see it to be $10.00 come February.

All this reminds me of nuclear power. When that 'miracle' source was first introduced, it was advertised as "too cheap to meter." We now know that it hasn't been entirely free. In Ontario each month we are reminded on our electricity bill of a certain "Debt Retirement Charge," the result of that nuclear fallacy.

In the same vein, we were told a few years ago that our supply of natural gas was good for at least 50 years. The rude reality is that Imperial Oil estimates that Canada's half century natural gas cushion has mysteriously evaporated, gone, melted away, ceased to be. Whatever is still out there in reserve, is slated to be used for the Tar-sand project in Alberta to make oil at great environmental expense.

Natural gas has had a checkered history. First it was seen as dangerous for human use: explosive and poisonous. However, in the last decade people have fallen for it as a godsent fuel: clean and efficient. True, as little as 5 years ago, it was a real bargain: about half the cost of oil, which also was much more polluting. It then became so popular that now that 65 percent of all dwellings, office towers, shopping centres and factories depend on it for heating and cooling, and almost all new electricity comes from this source. Also most of the 200,000 plus new houses in Canada and many of the 1.5 million residences built each year in the USA use are connected to the vast underground natural gas network.

Boats like floating bombs

Demand is growing so rapidly that supply can't keep up, even with all available drilling rigs out in the field looking for new discoveries. Oil is not like gas. Oil can easily be transported in giant tankers, but natural gas is continentally contained: no pipe lines are possible across the ocean floor. The only way to get it from the far-away places where there is a relative abundance – the Middle East and Siberia – is to ship it. To make that possible, it must be kept frozen to minus 176 degrees Celsius (minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit) in specially built liquid-natural-gas (LNG) tankers, and loaded and unloaded in ports specifically built for that purpose. All extremely costly.

Not only frighteningly expensive but also extremely dangerous. These docks and boats are like bombs: a terrorist attack or a collision or an accident would cause an explosion so large that it would level a large city, so people in coastal areas are not keen to see such a terminal in their back yard. There are currently only three such ports in the USA and none in Canada.

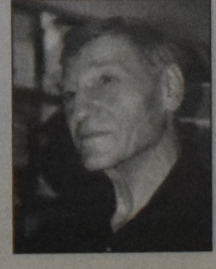
Says Matthew Simmons, a member of that mysterious committee that advised Vice President Cheney on energy, who now keeps on warning the world that soon demand will outstrip supply (and no doubt told Cheney this; hence Iraq) that the North American shortfall can only be filled by constructing 45 new LNG ports, which he considers to be an impossible goal. Already almost all of the existing LNG shipping capacity is spoken for by Japan, Korea and Taiwan through long-term contracts.

Conclusion: we are in for a shortage of natural gas, if not this year, then next. Pray for a cool summer with minimum use of airconditioning, a mild winter and the absence of hurricanes, which have a tendency to throw things out of whack.

Politicians invariably talk about economic growth and increasing prosperity. They fail to mention that both depend on ample availability of energy in all forms. Each year we in North America add 20 million cars to our crowded roads. China now has 7 million cars, where only a few existed 5 years ago. World-wide we have one billion cars, trucks and motorcycles, not even counting our lawnmowers, snow blowers, outboard motors, snowmobiles – all fuel-thirsty.

The entire world loves electronic gadgets: 6.3 billion people have 1 billion TV sets and 350 million computers, all power-hungry. Demand has skyrocketed while supply is mature: 70 percent of the world's oil comes from fields 30-80 years old. We all are hooked to and hooked on non-renewable energy. Without energy, nothing works.

How long will the Party last?



Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ontario. His website includes all past columns as well as other writings: www.geocities.com/hielemab

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...continued from page 17

dying happens inevitably when we begin to pray the Lord's Prayer with our heart and our whole being.

Be careful! If you want to maintain control over your life, and your ego wishes to remain number one, don't pray this prayer! You may be able to quote it and race through it, and lead others in this prayer in public meetings. That probably won't harm you. But if you begin to pray this prayer in spirit and in truth, your ego and prestige, your will and vanity will become critically compromised, and your 'old self' will die.

Classifieds

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Tot Ziens

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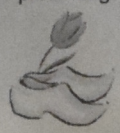

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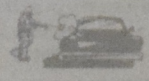

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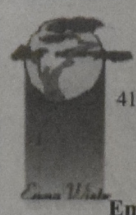

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July 29, 2004

Lutina Rumph-Kwant

will celebrate her
100th birthday
the Lord willing
on July 29th, 2004.
We celebrate and
give thanks to God
for our Mother
Grandmother
Great-Grandmother and
Great-Great-Grandmother.

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Jake Rumph & Teresa Rumph-Van Minnen, *Ancaster, Ontario*
Hilda Steenbergen-Rumph & John Steenbergen, *Drayton, Ontario*
Alice Van Dyke-Rumph & Ralph Van Dyke, *Kitchener, Ontario*
Albert Rumph & Ann Rumph-Drost, *Collingwood, Ontario*
35 grandchildren, 83 great-grandchildren
and 11 great-great-grandchildren.

Correspondence: Henry Rumph, 275 Main St Apt #220
Grimsby ON L3M 5N8

Note: Picture taken February 2, 2003 in her room at Shalom Manor, Grimsby. To see page in color go to **www.royaloak-estates.on.ca/100.pdf**

Anniversary

1954 July 20 2004

With praise and thankfulness to God,
the children and grandchildren of

ADRIAN AND JUDY VANRAVENSTEIN

are pleased to announce the celebration of their
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on July 20, 2004

Congratulations and lots of love from all of us.

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John & Carol VanRavenstein, *Mississauga ON*
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Gronigen 1954 July 2004 Guelph

"If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Exodus 33:15

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HENK AND LENA OOSTERVELD

Our special mother, oma & great-oma Hendrika Pyper.

Your children & grandchildren
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May God grant us the strength and wisdom to share & enjoy many more years of joy & happiness as a family.

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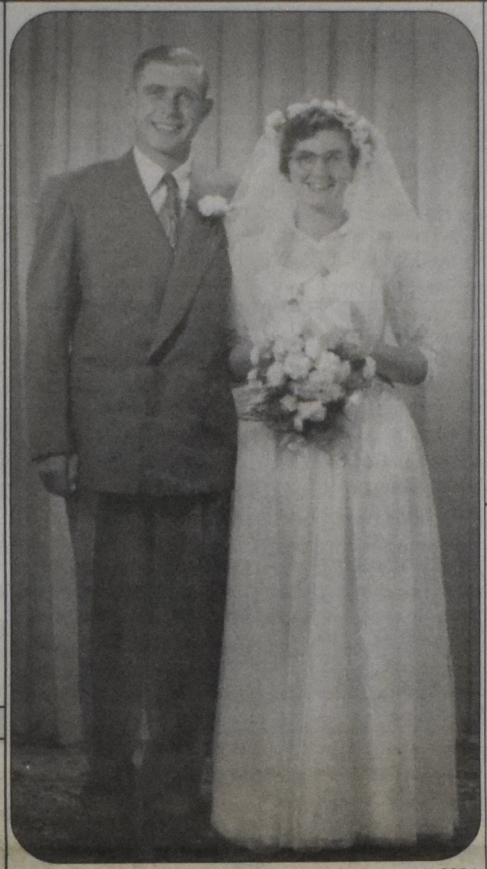
Anniversaries



1954 JULY 2 2004
Hamilton, Ontario Dunnville, Ontario

We recently celebrated the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

GERALD AND SUSAN BRUULSEMA

We thank God for his care in sustaining them through all their lives. Dad immigrated to Ancaster, Ontario in 1947, Mom came to Hamilton in 1951. They met while attending Mt. Hamilton CRC, and were married by Rev. Ehlers in 1954. They lived and worked in Hamilton where Dad owned a contracting business. In 1966 they moved to Dunnville and turned to cash crop farming.

The Lord has always been very important to them both, and we, their children, are so thankful for this rich heritage of faith. May God continue to bless you Mom and Dad.

With love from your children:
Ann & George Lunshof – Craig, Doug, Matt (Vanessa) and Amy
Jo-Anne & Richard Ogle – Susanna, Robert, Janna
Betty and Adam Roesch

Home address: RR #6, Dunnville ON N1A 2W5

"Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!
In gratitude for our Lord's continued faithfulness and love,
the children of

REV. & MRS. CAREL AND IRENE GELEYNSE

wish to announce their parents'
25th Wedding Anniversary
to take place on July 6, 2004 D.V.

Children: Martinus (1984), David (1986), Maria (1988), and Alexandra (1991).

The Geleynse's have served in Port Perry, Ontario; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; Flamborough, Ontario; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and currently: Chilliwack, British Columbia.

"The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me (them);
Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands." Psalm 138:8

Current Address: Rev. Carel & Irene Geleynse
10044 Shamrock Dr, Chilliwack BC V2P 5L2
cigeleynse@shaw.ca

1954 July 24 2004

The children and grandchildren of

JOHN AND HILDA STEENBERGEN

invite you to celebrate their
50th Wedding Anniversary.
Please join us at a **Open House**
on July 24 from 2-4
at the
Moorefield Community Centre.
Best wishes only

Congratulations from your *children*
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Fred, *Duncan BC*
Al & Gloria, *Sooke BC*
Aileen & Pat Zister, *Kitchener*
Jim & Irene, *Palmerston*
and grandchildren
Kelly, Paul, Tony, David, Stephanie, Phillip, Amy, Adam, Scott, Sarah, Kayla, Taylor & Jeffrey

Address: Box 123 Drayton N0G 1P0

1954 2004

With thanksgiving to God, we joyfully celebrate the **50th Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

HANK AND GRACE ZOER

An **Open House** will be held at
Calvin Christian School
in Drayton, Ontario
Saturday, July 10 from 2 - 4 p.m.
(*Best wishes only, please*)

Love and congratulations from:
Trudy & Harry Spaling, *Edmonton, Alberta*
Jane & Jerry Chilla, *Butte, Montana*
Frank & Stephanie Zoer, *Strathmore, Alberta*
Barbara Booy, *Leduc, Alberta*
Marlene & John Ottens, *Moorefield, Ontario*
Jeff & Kim Zoer, *Moorefield, Ontario*
and your 19 grandchildren

Matthew 6:33

Address: 15 Hillview Dr,
Drayton ON N0G 1P0

1959 June 26 2004

With joy and thanksgiving to God,
we wish to announce the
45th Wedding Anniversary
of our parents

HENK AND MARGARET TJOELKER

Sonya & Brian Smith, *Newmarket*
Taylor, Brandon, Karlee
Teresa & Bernie Janssen, *Aylmer, ON*
Vicki, Nicholas, Alison
Wayne & Sherry Tjoelker, *London, ON*
Timothy

Home address: 270 Davis Dr Unit 710
Newmarket ON L3Y 8K2

1964 - July 31 - 2004

"Praise the Lord for he is good"

With thanksgiving and rejoicing,
we announce the
40th Wedding Anniversary
of our parents,

ALBERT AND HELEN BOSMA
(nee **Eggink**)

Please join us for an **Open House**
on Saturday, July 31, 2004
from 2 - 4 p.m. D.V. at the
Parkview Meadows Dining Room
at 72 Town Centre Drive
Townsend, Ontario

Brenda & Ray Van Der Molen
Dennis, Aaron, Kristin, Leanne
Cindy & Ken Veld
Russell, Dylan
Lisa & Jim Hoogeveen
Brandon, Danielle, Andrew, Alyssa
Glenn
Mark & Erica
Tamara & Gary Van Zandwijk

Home address: RR 5
Hagersville ON N0A 1H0

1954 August 17 2004

ANN AND JOHN STEGGERDA

with our children
and grandchildren
will remember
and celebrate our
50 years of marriage

Please join us for an
Open house
on Saturday
August 28, 2004 DV

at the
Lighthouse Restaurant
2340 Ontario Street
Oakville L6L 6P7
905 827 7037

From 2 to 4 p.m.

Home address:
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Oakville ON L6L 1P2

Classifieds / Advertising

Obituaries

October 1924 — May 2004
Sint Anna Parachie — Friesland

On May 3, 2004 the Lord took home our dear brother and uncle

DIRK KUIKEN

We pray that God will comfort and strengthen his wife Marte, their children and grandchildren.

We take comfort in knowing that Dirk is safe in the arms of Jesus.

Jelke Wierstra & Dirk, *Denhelder*
Alice Kuiken & family, *Oshawa*
Jacob Kuiken & family, *Guelph*
Ate Kuiken & family, *Woodstock*

On June 12, 2004, our Heavenly Father, in his infinite wisdom, took home

THYS RUMPH

in his 92nd year

Dear brother-in-law of
Lutina Rumph-Kwant
Dear uncle of
Henry & Lammie Rumph
Arnold & Ann Marie Rumph
Hilbert & Diny Rumph
Jake & Teresa Rumph
Hilda & John Steenbergen
Alice & Ralph Van Dyke
Albert & Ann Rumph

May the Lord comfort the family with their loss.

MARTJE TUYL (nee **Slager**)

Stedum — Toronto
13 February 1926 — June 15, 2004

The Lord transferred Martje's membership to the Church Triumphant.
We are thankful for that grace, but miss her dearly.

Carl
Corrie
Dian
Alice
Derrick

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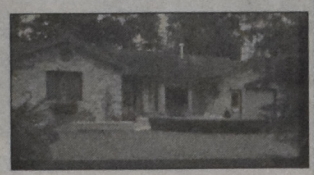

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Church Event

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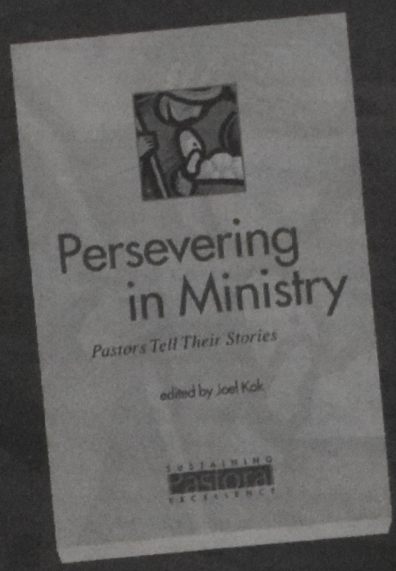
All former members and friends are invited to come and celebrate with us. Festivities are being planned. Come join our celebration!

For more information please contact Anniversary Committee members:

Chairman: Fred VanderVelde Tel: 905-336-5619 Fax: 905-336-2376

Secretary: Brenda DeGroot Tel: 905-689-6350
E-mail: p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca

NOTE: We are currently looking for pictures and other memorabilia that we could use for publishing and/or displaying. Please mail to the church address: 420 Highway #5, R.R. #2, Dundas, ON L9H 5E2



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This book is made possible by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Classifieds

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Peter Van Duyvenvoorde, General Manager
CLAC Benefit Administration Office
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Fax: (905) 945-7200
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 1 Frisian Picnic, 11a.m. at the Pinehurst Conservation Park, **Paris**, Ont., Highway 24A

July 1,2,3 The Granum Christian Reformed Church, **Granum**, Alberta, will celebrate its 100 year anniversary. See ad this issue for details and contact information.

July 11 A dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Chr Ref Church at 3 pm. Rev J Kuntz preaching.

Nov. 6,7 Calvin CRC, **Dundas**, Ont. will celebrate their **50th year**. Come join our celebration! Festivities are being planned. For info: Fred VanderVelde at 905-336-5619 Fax: 905-336-2376 or Brenda DeGroot at 905-689-6350 or email: p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca See ad this issue.

Sept18 Sample the world of international development at the CRWRC Global Bazaar, 9 a.m. -1 p.m. at Faith Christian Reformed Church in **Burlington**. Add culture to your décor with crafts, colorful cloths and artifacts handmade in CRWRC project countries. Try a tasty morsel from the multicultural finger food bar. View slideshows, participate in live demos and tap your toes to international rhythms. Kids collect stamps in their "passport" as they visit huts filled with info and photos from the field.For more details phone 905-336-2920 or send an email to hunseh@crcna.ca.

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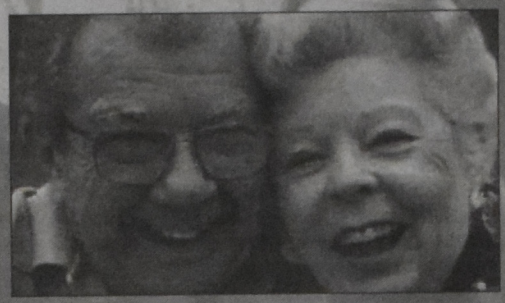

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Did same-sex marriage undermine marriage in The Netherlands?

The Dutch don't draw the attention of journalists and commentators very often, but in recent weeks they are referred to again and again in discussions about marriage. Fewer and fewer couples, even among those raising families, bother going through the process of exchanging vows and registering themselves as married.

Dutch couples have long been "shacking up" before marriage, but when children came along they hurried to the town hall to make it legal – until recently. Over the last seven years the number of children born to unmarried mothers has shot up. In 2003 over 30 percent of all children were born out of wedlock.

No more brides?

What has brought about this dramatic shift in behavior?

The recognition of same-sex marriage, says Stanley Kurtz, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution (a conservative think-tank). While others have argued that gay marriage doesn't weaken the institution of marriage but affirms and strengthens it, Kurtz says the evidence doesn't support that theory.

Although gay marriage was only legalized four years ago in The Netherlands, the view of marriage behind it has been shaping the Dutch attitude toward marriage for a decade, he suggests. Proponents of gay marriage dismissed the idea that marriage ought to be defined by the possibility of childbearing, arguing that the real basis of marriage is love between two partners – regardless of gender. The idea caught on in The Netherlands and was passed into law in 2000.

"What's happening in the Netherlands gives us clear evidence of what gay marriage does," concludes Mark Earley, writing in Colson's Breakpoint column: "People stop getting married, and children suffer."

For many years, despite liberal laws, the Dutch had not gone the way of Scandinavia, where marriage has long been on the wane. However, marriage seemed to be holding its own in The Netherlands. But, says Kurtz, the extension of marriage to same-sex partners did not result in the celebration of more marriages and in greater prestige for the institution but, on the contrary, to its abandonment.

Other factors

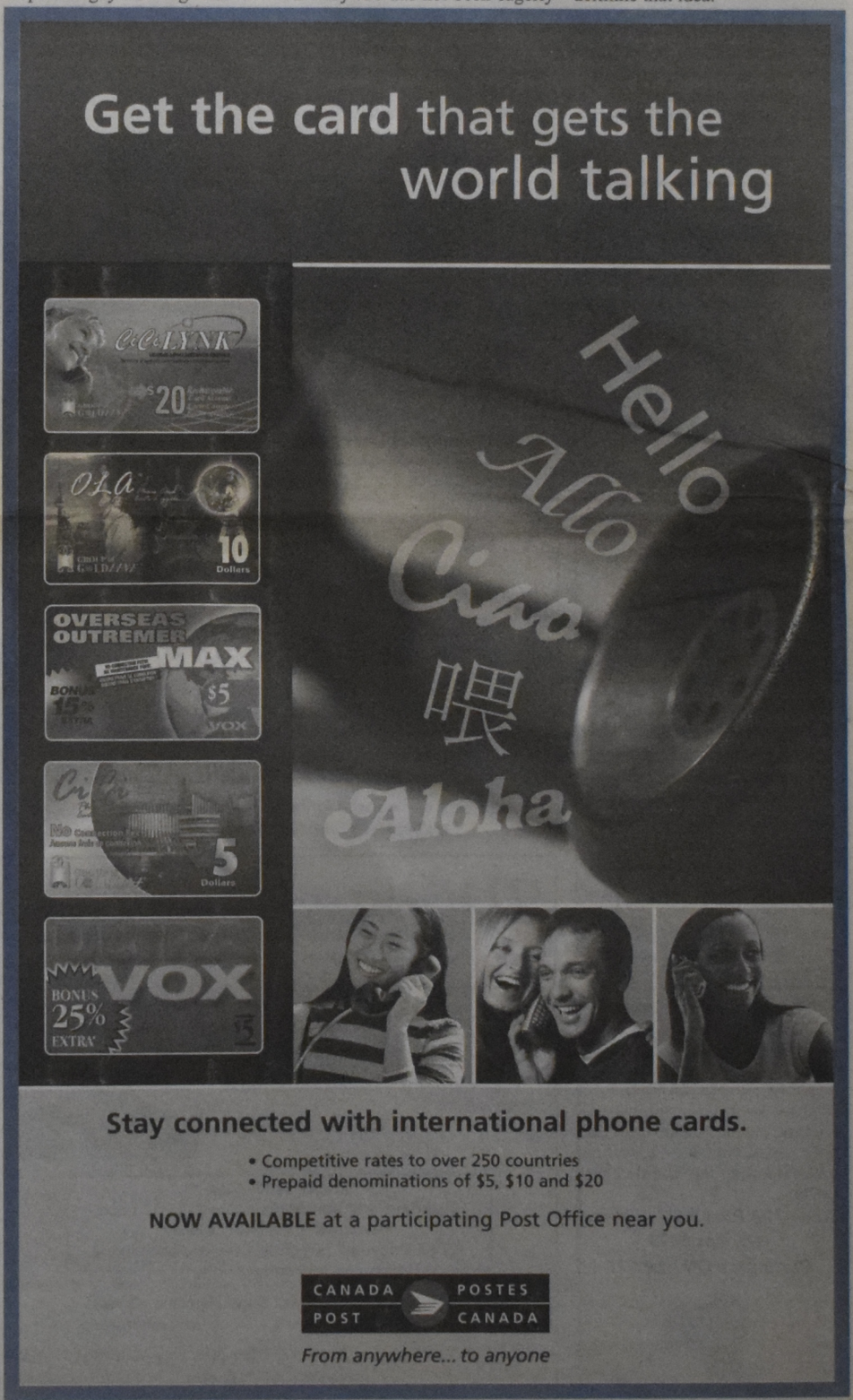
There could, of course be many other explanations for such an increases in the number of couples who choose to live common law – contraception, abortion, women in the workforce, individualism, secularism, and the welfare state. Kurtz examines each of these factors one by one in his study *Going Dutch*.

Contraception has long been recognized as one of the biggest contributors to the new sexual morality. It broke the link between sex and child-bearing, but although it weakened the link between marriage and parenthood, it did not break it.

In the Netherlands, the pill has been available free of charge to any woman who wants it. This has kept out-of-wedlock births to teenage girls among the lowest in Europe. The present surge in out-of-wedlock births is not to teens but to mature adults who have chosen not to marry.

And Dutch women have not abandoned motherhood for the joys of career, says Kurtz. In the Netherlands government childcare is not very widespread. Many mothers still stay home to raise children or work part-time.

Secularism has taken The Netherlands by storm over the last several decades. Despite the widespread indifference to the church and religion, however, the Dutch have clung to an ethic that frowns on abortion and respects the family. Kurtz also looks at the influence of individualism and the welfare state as factors in the decline of marriage. But neither has increased appreciably over the last decade. Dutch tax law does not discourage marriage, but it does extend the same benefits to unmarried as to married couples. Still, this has been true long before the present trend began.

Those who study such trends have had a hard time explaining the sudden, unexpected drop in the status of marriage. Although, Kurtz admits, it is difficult to trace cause-and-effect relationships in a complex society, he concludes that embracing a view of marriage that is open to gay marriage has not enhanced respect for marriage in The Netherlands but rapidly undermined it.

Notice that Kurtz says nothing about the impact of gay marriage as such upon life in The Netherlands, for it was introduced only recently and has not been eagerly embraced by the homosexual community. What he addresses is actually the demise of the traditional idea of marriage as basic to the family in the mind of the Dutch, and he suggests that the same-sex marriage debate did much to undermine that idea.